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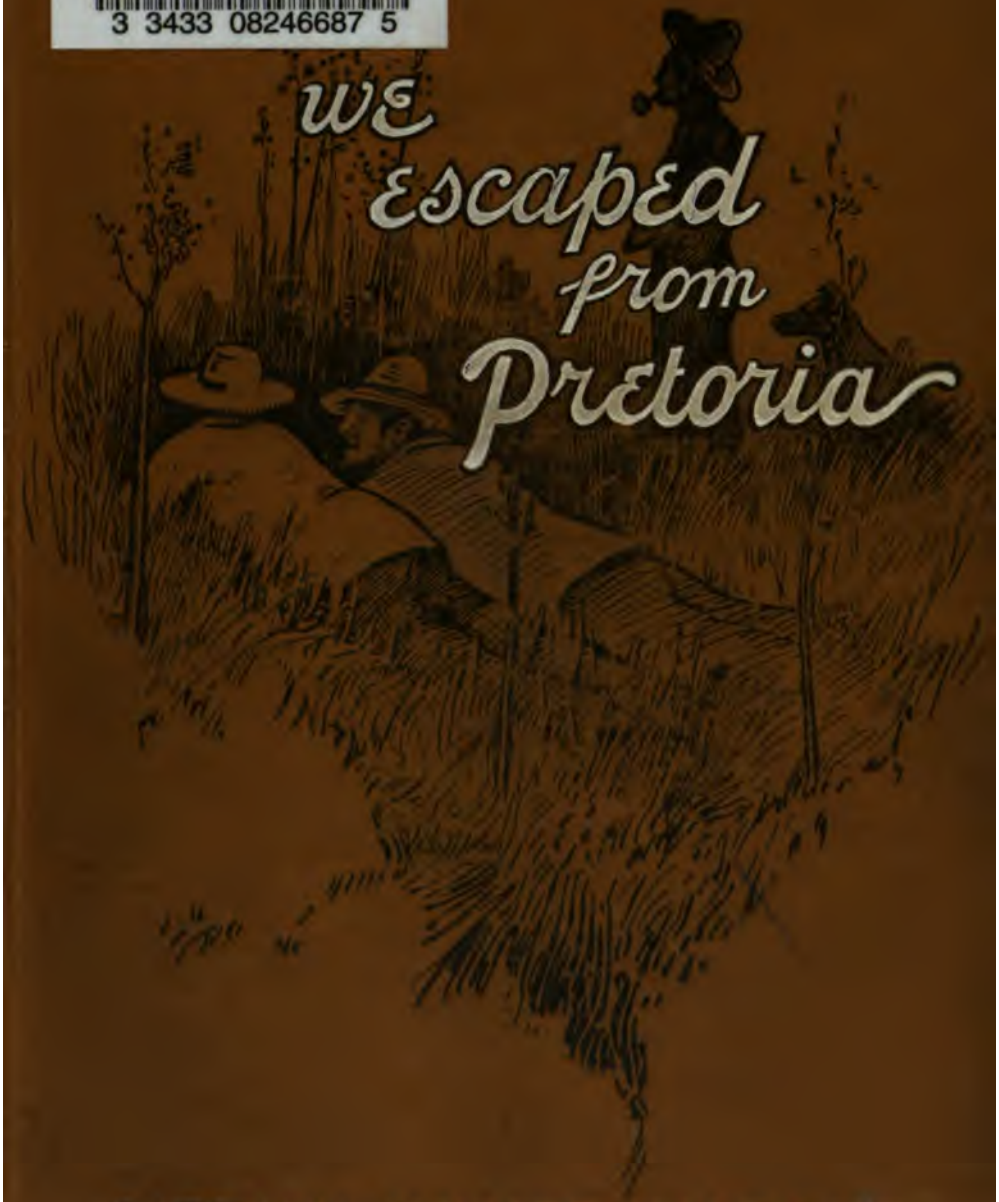
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We Escaped from Pretoria



CAPTAIN AYLMER HALDANE

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HOW WE ESCAPED FROM PRETORIA

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CAPTAIN AYLMER HALDANE, D.S.O.

HOW WE ESCAPED FROM PRETORIA

BY

CAPTAIN AYLMER HALDANE, D.S.O.
2ND BATT. GORDON HIGHLANDERS

"Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit"

NEW EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED
WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS,
PLANS, AND MAP

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NOTE TO REVISED EDITION.

ENCOURAGED by the favourable reception of the first account of my adventures and those of my companions, and at the desire of many friends, I have been induced to prepare a fuller narrative of our escape from Pretoria. The original articles on the subject, published in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' were written very shortly after the events they recorded. Since that time I have recalled many incidents then overlooked, and have been placed in possession of facts of which I was then unaware. The countless questions to which I have been subjected may have been difficult to bear with perfect equanimity, but they have at least had the merit of stimulating memory and drawing attention to those points which

were in the first instance not fully described. In the present edition it has been my endeavour to omit nothing which may present features of interest.

My acknowledgment and thanks are due to Major the Hon. Robert Carnegie of my regiment for the drawings—executed by him from my description—represented at pages 81, 148, 157, and 177, and to Messrs Harmsworth for those at pages 33, 36, 64, and 160.

LONDON, 15*th November* 1901.

NOTE TO FIRST EDITION.

As those of my readers who chanced to see the brief accounts of our escape from Pretoria which have appeared in the English and other papers may possibly observe some slight discrepancy between those narratives and the one in the following pages, I take this opportunity of explaining the cause thereof.

In the press account I was unable to take the public entirely into my confidence, since on the night of the seventh day after leaving Pretoria we met with very material assistance from our own countrymen, the fact of which could in no way be disclosed without placing the lives and property of those who unhesitatingly risked both in the most imminent peril.

Until the war approached a successful termination I could not give a full and complete account of our adventures, and at the same time tender our heartfelt thanks to those without whose timely aid we should have had the greatest difficulty in reaching the Portuguese frontier.

LADYSMITH, *May* 1900.

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HOW WE ESCAPED FROM PRETORIA.

I.

CHIEVELEY TO PRETORIA.

"The most unkindest cut of all."

After the fight of the 21st October 1899 at Elandslaagte I was sent to Pietermaritzburg together with other wounded, there to be cared for and made fit to resume my place at the front. But during the last days of October and the first of November events rapidly developed; and Ladysmith becoming surrounded by the Boer main army, I found myself cut off from my regiment, which formed part of the beleaguered garrison. As soon as I could walk I obtained permission to proceed to

Estcourt, the farthest point north held by the relieving force, whence I hoped to have an opportunity of passing through the Boer lines with despatches and so rejoin my regiment. At Estcourt I was attached for duty to the 2nd battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, one of those battalions which had taken part in the dashing capture of Talana Hill and the retreat to Ladysmith, whence it had been sent to Colenso and later to its present quarters.

Several days passed unbroken by any event worth recording. Day after day, generally at the same hour, the armoured train, or (as it was named by the men in camp) "Wilson's death-trap," used to press forth unattended beyond the line of outposts, heralding, by agonised gasps and puffs, and clouds of smoke and steam, its advent to the far-sighted, long-hearing Boer. Daily, too, did it return in safety to the siding whence it had sallied forth at daybreak on its fruitless mission. How relieved the occupants looked when they climbed over its plated sides and congratu-

lated themselves that their turn to form the freight of this moribund engine of war would not come round again for at least some days.

Mine, alas! arrived on the 15th of November.

On the preceding day there had been an alarm in camp. Corps stood to their arms and forthwith occupied the various defences and localities that they were detailed to hold. That night I received orders to reconnoitre on the following day with the armoured train.

I am not going to recount the events of that day, which already have been portrayed by an abler pen than mine. I will take up the tale at the point where I became a captive in the hands of the Boers — for it is my purpose in these pages to treat mainly of my captivity and escape, not to launch into matters to which full justice already has been done.

The morning of my capture—which took place at 8.50 A.M. after defending the armoured train for an hour and a half—was raw and damp: mist hung heavily on the

surrounding hills, and a small drizzling rain, which from time to time exerted itself until it attained to the magnitude of a shower, rapidly penetrated our garments, and added to the misery and discomfort of our unenviable position. Our escort politely begged us not to hurry, saying that there were lots of time, and that although they were unable themselves to spare us either food or clothing, we should find on reaching Pretoria all we required—nay, even that there we should be provided with the usual games with which the British officer delights to exercise himself. From their description, all that could delight the heart of man or prisoner awaited us in the Boer capital. No doubt they meant kindly, very kindly; but no promised land, no vista of untold delight, as seen through our eyes at that moment, could have made one's pulse beat even a shade faster. Some deep and dreary dungeon, or, still more so, an *oubliette*, seemed consonant with my feelings.

Meanwhile, trudging along the muddy



Armoured train passing Frere Station.—See p. 2.

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veldt road, we came upon a number of Boers who were cleaning their rifles after being engaged with us, and with them was a party of Staats Artillery officers. With one of the latter, the officer in command, who was neatly dressed in cord coat and breeches, faced with blue, I had some conversation. He began by asking me why we had not surrendered at once, and congratulating us on the defence of the train, but lamenting that his guns had not been better laid, in which case, according to his reckoning, our shrift would have been a short one. He mentioned that the Boers had fully resolved to capture the train and its luckless occupants, but that they had had sufficient patience to wait until the psychological moment, or perhaps that which coincided best with their own convenience, had arrived. At a later period I ascertained that General Joubert had personally superintended the arrangements for the derailment of the train, and in addition had given directions as to where the guns and men who engaged us were to be posted. He then went on to say that his three heavy

guns had each fired an average of thirty rounds, and that (as we well knew) he had employed a Vickers-Maxim gun against us, a machine which had since received the *sobriquet* of "Pom-pom." Passing on from here, we were ushered into the midst of the camp of a large commando which was snugly ensconced behind some low hills not far from the commanding ground overlooking the spot where the Boers had wrecked our train. Here Churchill's papers were examined and taken to General Joubert, whom, I regret to say, we were not allowed to see; and great excitement was displayed on its becoming known that the real live son of a lord was amongst the prisoners. A crowd of rough-looking, and for the most part bearded, fellows soon gathered round us, and while Churchill's case was under the consideration of the commandant-general, a running fire of questions on various matters connected with the struggle which had so recently begun was maintained. It was plain to me now that we were in the thick of a strong force which was on its way southwards. According to my own computation, I should have

put down the numbers seen as from 3000 to 4000 men; but the Boers themselves stated that there were 6500. As events afterwards proved, our unfortunate reconnaissance had encountered that portion of the Boer army which had been detached from the force engaged in besieging Ladysmith, and which was about to make what resulted in an abortive attempt to reach Durban.

After a brief halt, during which General Joubert had come to the decision that Churchill, although a non-combatant, should not be then and there released, but should accompany the other prisoners to Pretoria, we were ordered to move on. Doubtless the Boer commander was well aware of the valuable assistance Churchill had given in saving the engine from capture, and this, added to the fact that he must have mentally noted the strength of the commando, offered a strong argument against release.

The country about here is not interesting, although it was destined to become so ere a month had passed, and we ourselves were not in a mood to appreciate the beauties of nature, more especially as the inner man

was beginning to cry out that he was being neglected.

Somewhat weary after a tramp of sixteen miles, and further fatigued by the exhausting experience of the morning, we at length came within sight of the village of Colenso. It presented every appearance of some unusual condition of affairs, — windows smashed, doors unhinged, furniture and crockery scattered broadcast over the grass-grown streets—in short, every indication of a hostile occupation.

Feeling considerable anxiety as to what reports regarding our fate might have travelled back to Estcourt with the engine, we were much relieved to find here two Boer war correspondents, who, after assuring us that that portion of the train had escaped, undertoook to telegraph to England at the earliest opportunity the fact that we were alive.

Night was now falling, and we were hurried on to a large goods-shed contiguous to the main platform of the insignificant railway-station. We were directed to accept this as our lodging for the night, and ex-

pectations were held out that shortly an ox would be killed, and we should have our share of what promised to be a somewhat tough and untoothsome meal. This promise was not long in the fulfilment. The beast of burden was slain, and almost as soon as the proverbial Indian dâk-bungalow chicken finds its way from the compound to the pot, we were busily engaged in cooking scraps of meat on sticks held over a fire, and looking forward to enjoying what are called in the East *kababs*. The wind was blowing, and the rain falling, as we crouched round the wood fires, each and all intent on the rapid preparation of our frugal meal. The warmth of the burning sticks and the discomfort of burnt fingers rapidly did their share in appeasing our hunger, and we betook ourselves to our temporary prison, where, selecting a corner apart from the men, we made a bed by spreading on the concrete floor the contents of some compressed forage bales. Burying ourselves in the short dry hay, we huddled close together, endeavouring thereby to retain such warmth as still remained in our weary limbs.

The building in which we were congregated contained two wooden doors, of which one was securely fastened with large nails; while the other, guarded by a double sentry on the outside, was closed upon us shortly after nightfall. In the corrugated iron roof of the shed was a small skylight. A glance round on first entering it had raised hopes of a possible escape during the night, which as regards climatic conditions was singularly favourable. To have fashioned some equivalent of a rope, mounted by means of the rafters, removed the glass of the skylight, reached the exterior of the roof and thence dropping to the ground, on that side where we supposed no watch was kept, covered the thirty miles which lay between us and Estcourt, seems no difficult affair when regarded by the light of events which were yet to come. But though, when I look back on this lost chance, it seems like child's play compared with the difficulties which later opportunities presented, to our weary bodies and fagged-out brains it appeared to offer little chance of success, and we were only too glad to procrastinate, and to console

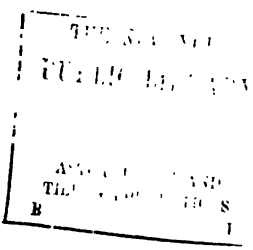
ourselves with the thought that on the night of the morrow we should be within range of the guns of Ladysmith, and possibly in a far better position to give our captors the slip.

Having for the time dissolved the committee on ways and means of evasion, we turned our thoughts towards slumber, and made such dispositions as were most likely to lure "nature's soft nurse" to our aid and so "steep our senses in forgetfulness." But nature's soft nurse must have had an important engagement elsewhere; for she peremptorily declined to say anything to my case, and I was fain to lie awake through the long night, the events of the past twelve hours coursing through my brain, chased by the vain imaginings of what still lay before us.

Stuffiness reigned supreme, the only door of the building being fast closed by the guard, who, no doubt, considered that we within were not unenviably situated compared with those without. Outside, the pitter-patter of the rain resounded monotonously on the metal roof. Inside, some fifty mortals lay, for the most part, wrapped in heavy slumber, no sound save the rhythmic

snore of some weary warrior, or the unintelligible jargon from the lips of some sleeper busy in his dreams, breaking in upon the profound silence. But, hark! what means that sound of deep and manly voices, now swelling, now dying away, without, in the cheerless night!

For a moment one almost forgot where one was—amid the pious God-fearing Boers. We strain the ear and soon distinguish the tune of the "Old Hundredth," followed again by other and familiar chants. Such, indeed, is the custom of the enemy. Nightly, in every camp, the commandant assembles all his men whom the call of duty does not take elsewhere, and before retiring to rest a short time is devoted to prayer and praise. Honesty compels me to show the reverse of this picture. These very men, who are almost as full of apt texts as the great Cromwell's Ironsides, are far from acting up to the high religious sentiments that they profess. They are singularly untruthful, eminently boastful, lamentably immoral, and their ideas of *meum* and *tuum* would do credit to a London pickpocket. My statement regard-





Armoured train after the accident.—See p. 6.

ing their characteristics may seem sweeping; nevertheless it is true, and "Never trust a Dutchman" is a byword among the British in South Africa.

But the Boers, who here have no enemy immediately in front of them, and consist solely of our escort, have now retired to rest, and we turn over and hope for morning.

At length it dawns, and we are told to bestir ourselves and prepare for the road. Munching a cold *kabab*, washed down by a draught of water from the engine-pump, we follow our captors in melancholy procession to the banks of the river. Here we are invited to wade across—an unnecessary proceeding, considering the close proximity of the foot-bridge; but the Tugela river before the rains is only a paltry obstacle, and our company is soon assembled on the farther bank. We plod along steadily and somewhat silently, until we reach the summit of the hill on which is a Boer post overlooking Pieter's station. Here we halt, and make short work of a tin of bully beef which, with a scrap of biltong, some kindly rustic presents to us, and in return for which I make

him a present of my Sam-Browne sword-belt, foreseeing that it is not likely to be of any use for some time to come.

Away to the north-west we can clearly distinguish the captive balloon hovering like some strange phantom of mythology over what assuredly must be Ladysmith. Ever and anon the deep boom of the Boer great gun reaches our ears, followed by the responsive and angry roar of our Naval Artillery. Sometimes a great cloud of white smoke discloses to us where Long Tom lies so cunningly hid. We descend the rocky side of the hill, and crossing the railway strike a much-worn waggon-track, which we are told leads beyond the Klip river to our night's halting-place. A couple of miles over a grassy plain brings us to the drift, a fairly deep one, reaching nearly to our waists. Over we go, with difficulty keeping our feet on the slippery stones, and a short half-hour brings us to the end of that day's tramp.

Seating ourselves under the welcome shade of a stunted oak, we are soon surrounded by every living soul from the

adjacent camp, which in our eyes more resembles a gypsy settlement than a military post. The old commandant, Davel, soon appeared on the scene, and in broken English invited us to share his tent, secure from the sun's rays, which had become oppressive. We acquiesce, and following him to the brow of the hill, enter the welcome shade he proffers.

I have the most vivid and lasting recollection of the attention and kindness which this old Dutch farmer lavished upon us. Throughout the journey to the Boer metropolis we met with nothing but the greatest consideration; but this old commander not only gave us of the best he could,—and at that time the Boer commissariat arrangements were in their infancy,—but insisted on lending us some of his blankets, provided us with candles, and with his own hands brought us coffee on the following morning. He presented Churchill with a blanket, and we really felt quite sorry to leave his camp.

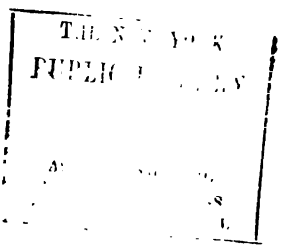
We passed many hours in his tent, which seemed to be the focus of movement in the

camp. All who came to the post he commanded seemed to drop in, give him the time of day, and, after a few minutes' conversation, vanish. During the afternoon two nephews of General Joubert belonging to the Staats Artillery returned to the camp from their tour of duty on Long Tom, and pressed on us the contents of their cigarette-cases. Churchill, needless to say, afforded all the greatest source of interest. With much ability, coupled with quick repartee, he defended the justice of the war; but it struck me that these plain-spoken, ignorant farmers, who based their arguments on the capitalists and Mr Chamberlain, declaring that but for these two ruling factors matters would never have come to blows, somewhat shook his faith, and certainly gained his sympathy. Knowing nothing of the Boers personally, beyond an experience of twenty-four hours, I for the time being dismissed from my thoughts the overwhelming importance of the question of British supremacy in South Africa, and felt inclined to sympathise with these rude tillers of the soil in their plaint



Photo by Stereoscopic Co.

Ladysmith.—See p. 14.



that the arbitrament of arms had been forced upon them. A few months have made it clear to me how insidiously the country Boer has been taught to believe as gospel those specious arguments which are everywhere on the tip of his tongue. He firmly believes that the war is one of capitalists, and that we wish to occupy his country,—and perhaps he is not very wide of the mark now. Had this simple-minded agriculturist known the true state of affairs, I question greatly whether even President Kruger, backed by the Psalms of David, could have kept him in the field for half as many months as he has. Leave the country Boer to himself, — and there is plenty of room for him,—let him lead the pastoral existence for which alone he is suited, let him live, die, and be buried, as is his custom, on his own farm, and I take leave to think that to him it is not a matter of stupendous importance whether he be under the Dutch flag or the English. I have been told by those who have a good claim to know that no mean proportion of the rural population will welcome

our advent, which is dreaded solely by the rapacious officials and overbearing underlings of the most corrupt and venal State of latter days.

But I have wandered far afield.

Later in the day a member of the Honourable Artillery Company, an Irishman, paid us a visit, and told us that he formed one of the gun-crew serving Long Tom on Umbulwana Hill, and that being a burgher of the Transvaal he had been forced to take up arms for his adopted country. He assured us that the naval guns in Ladysmith, though they made good practice, had not yet succeeded in searching out the weapon which he and others served. Long Tom, it seems, was cunningly hidden in a bomb-proof casemate, built of sand-bags, that protected both him and his attendants. As this was early in the history of the siege, we suggested that when his turn came round for laying the gun, he would do well to direct the sights so that the projectile might fall where it would do no harm. He chaffingly consented, and three weeks

later, being granted short leave of absence, paid us a visit, bringing with him a large quantity of cigarettes.

The natural question, "When do you mean to take Ladysmith?" being put, all with one accord affirmed, with the utmost confidence, that they would do so shortly, but that they were in no violent hurry to carry out the operation. *Delenda est Carthago* was easier said than done, and here it never passed beyond the stage of threat. On my pointing out to the anxious listeners that in their place we should not sit down and rest contented with looking at it, hoping the wall would come to us and so save our having to go to the wall, like Mahomet, they had a reply ready to hand. "Were the commandant-general" (meaning General Joubert), one of them insubordinately answered, "to order me to go and attack Ladysmith to-morrow, I should refuse point-blank, and my comrades would do likewise: most of us have wives and children, and we don't want to be killed!" To meet the case, some one suggested that the young unmarried men might be suitably employed in the assault;

but this did not appear to find favour with any young man present.

Another topic which, under present circumstances, did not lend itself to lengthened discussion, and which seemed to be on the tongue of every Boer we met, evidently arose from some offensive remarks published at one time or another in the English newspapers. It may be that our captors were not above laying themselves out to be complimented, or were honestly offended at the picture of their characteristics as depicted in the journals of their enemy. What the exact condition of their minds may have been was beyond my knowledge and penetration, but their thoughts were speedily translated into the frequently reiterated questions — "Do *you* think we are uncivilised? Are we then such barbarians as you English say, and is this your own experience of us?" I will leave the reader to supply the answer which at once and without hesitation came from our lips, and which, though doubtless anticipated, was none the less agreeable to our hearers. The Boers were then on their best behaviour; and indeed, with rare exceptions,

wherever they have been met in organised bodies and under leaders, they have acted towards their prisoners in a humane and considerate manner.

Another point regarding which they seemed to have doubts and preconceived ideas impossible to dispel, was that of the numbers of men of which the British army was said to be composed. The more ignorant among them had doubtless been bred up in the fallacy that our army had been annihilated at Majuba, and that it could be possible to find as many as 200,000 *rooineks* to fight them seemed utterly beyond their power of comprehension. A few among the more intelligent ones gave indications that their mental outlook in some measure grasped the magnitude of the operations, which were then only in their infancy; but even these appeared to think that they had now in front of them the entire British army, and that reinforcements which might come hereafter would but be of inferior quality, and consequently more easily overcome.

A great part of the day was passed in futile attempts to convince our captors of the

fatal error that had been made in declaring war, and when night came I felt glad to be relieved both of their presence and their arguments.

Our hopes of escape, apart from the feeling that it would be rather mean to fly from our hospitable commandant and launch him in a sea of trouble, were on this night, as on the previous, doomed to disappointment. We were located in a small tent between another in which were the men captured with us and a waggon, underneath which a party of Boers had taken up their quarters, moving in and out during the night with disturbing frequency. Seated at the tent door were two Boers with loaded rifles, and a similar precaution prevented exit at the other end. The moon was full, or nearly so, and a small object at a distance of several hundred paces would have been visible and no difficult target for a Boer marksman. Under these circumstances the matter had to be faced philosophically, and having decided to defer our hopes of escape till later, we retired to rest, nor did we hear the nightly strains of music which no doubt arose later.

Daybreak saw us once more afoot and wending our way northwards, the men following in our wake. The day was fine, and all seemed so calm and peaceful—for at so early an hour the daily great gun duel had not begun—that it was hard to believe that the campaign was proceeding, still harder to realise that we were really prisoners of war. We were told that when we reached the railway-station of Modder Spruit, we should find a train waiting to take us to Pretoria, and also that we should obtain some food, which some of us sorely needed. Dropping down the far side of the neck, which we had climbed on the previous day, we passed behind Umbulwana Hill and soon after crossed the Modder Spruit, then on behind Lombards Kop and over a grassy rocky plain. During our march we passed more than one large camp, all being well sheltered, by choice of site, from the iron hail of the Ladysmith guns; and in the distance towards Pepworths farm and Surprise Hill I saw and mentally noted the positions of several other smaller encampments. All these camps appeared to be connected with

each other by the electric telegraph, and as our little company threaded its way through some of them, the occupants crowded round us like bees. The thought crossed my mind that if only somehow one could convey the knowledge of the enemy's position gained, on the march from Pieter's to Modder Spruit, to the garrison of Ladysmith, how useful might it not be. But the iron heel of fate crushed any hopes of effecting such a purpose, and our near approach to the railway brought one's thoughts back to the stern reality of the situation.

We reached the station at 9.30 A.M., and shortly after were invited to enter a first-class carriage, the men being accommodated with covered trucks. Here our party was augmented by the arrival of Sergeant-Major A. Brockie, Imperial Light Horse, who had been captured whilst swimming the Klip river on the previous morning, on his way back to Ladysmith from a scouting expedition through the Boer camps. Brockie had been sent in charge of the Boer prisoners taken at Elandslaagte to Durban, whence he

had returned to Estcourt. After a few days at that place he had obtained permission to attempt to rejoin his regiment, then besieged in Ladysmith, taking with him despatches for Sir George White. After he had related to me his adventures in passing through the Boer lines, I decided that from his knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, and his acquaintance with the Dutch and Kaffir languages, he would be a useful companion with whom to attempt an escape. He whispered to me that he had given out to his captors that he was a lieutenant in the Natal Carabineers, and we undertook to support his deception. His object in this misrepresentation, to further which he had removed the regimental badges from his slouch hat and shoulder-straps, was to avoid being lodged in Pretoria jail, whence escape would have been no easy matter. He knew that such would be his fate should it transpire to what corps he actually belonged, for the members of the Imperial Light Horse are held in peculiar aversion by the Boers. The reason is not far to seek. The majority of those serving

in this corps, which has so greatly distinguished itself during the war, are residents of Johannesburg, and many had taken a prominent part in the Jameson Raid, some actually having served on the Reform Committee.

Before leaving this station we met with the only insulting language experienced throughout our journey, and this from an Irishman. I was glad to observe that the men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers treated him with a silent scorn which his cowardly conduct merited.

By way of escort we were provided with two Boers, who travelled in the carriage as far as Volksrust, where they were relieved by two others. The younger of the two former confided to me, with youthful glee, that he had fired over one hundred rounds at us on the 15th, and had got a week's leave to visit his *vrouw;* while his elder comrade, who spoke but little English, and resembled somewhat a Scottish gamekeeper, was described to us as the man who put the stone on the line which was the cause of the derailment of the armoured train. He had

been awarded a fortnight's leave for his successful feat, and not some costly war decoration.

The Boers have a strange and objectionable custom of firing from the trains when in motion, when any game they may chance to see is within range. This, I believe, is prohibited by their laws, but neither that nor the fact of its being the close season had any deterrent effect on our fellow-travellers. Passing Elandslaagte, which from its name might be taken to suggest the proximity of one species of antelope, a herd of buck passed us in Indian file some four hundred yards distant. Pop, pop, went the Mausers, the bullets knocking up the dust fairly near the terrified animals. They galloped off apparently untouched, and I was glad to see that the vaunted marksmanship was at fault. An equally unsuccessful attempt at useless slaughter was repeated the following day in the Transvaal.

We passed many trains bearing living freight of men and horses to the front, and at every station on the line numbers of people of both sexes crowded round the

carriage windows, some expressing disappointment to find that I was not arrayed in the garb of old Gaul. Fat and forward *vrouws* intimated to us that they would like to be the happy possessors, and no doubt wearers, of our regimental buttons and badges; but we were ungallant enough to repel their unwelcome advances.

At length, shortly before nightfall, we came in view of the solid mass presented by Majuba Hill, — for me a spot of the greatest interest, my regiment having left on the top, in the action of the 27th February 1881, ninety-six killed and wounded out of one hundred and twenty. I had never thought to see this hill in such fashion, and I mentally registered a vow—one, too, which seven months later was fulfilled—that I should yet live to gaze at it, going northwards with my regiment. Through the tunnel which pierces Laing's Nek there was an opportunity to spring forth from the window, like Charles Peace the burglar, and make for the open veldt, but we were now full a hundred miles from Ladysmith, the country between us and it

infested with Boers, and ourselves clad in uniform. The Boer guards, too, were singularly watchful, and a glance out of the carriage window displayed to view on right and left more than one bearded face casting its eyes along the train ready for any eventuality that might occur.

Charlestown, the last British settlement in North Natal, was passed, and at Volksrust, the first station inside the Transvaal border, our escort was changed, and an inspector of police having joined us, Sergeant-Major Brockie was subjected to a close examination, with a view to find out whether he had resided long in Johannesburg, and if he were a burgher. As he was talking somewhat freely about his acquaintance with that city, a young Boer from Swaziland standing at the window whispered to me that if I did not want to get him into trouble I had better warn him to put a guard on his tongue. I think that this little incident shows how well disposed towards us the people were in many cases. I do not think that this predilection altogether begins and ends with us soldiers, though undoubtedly a large

majority look upon us as blindly carrying out our orders without being much concerned with what we are fighting about.

At this station, where we halted for half an hour, a rough-looking fellow came to the window and seemed to be on the point of making himself offensive to us, but the escort quickly ordered him about his business. A loquacious Frenchman pressed to the front and began talking to us in his own language, but the police-inspector, not understanding what was passing, requested us to cease. This same inspector, who accompanied us for several stations, was, like many of his countrymen, of a highly suspicious nature; for while Brockie and I were whispering together regarding the best means of escaping from Pretoria, he kept his lynx-like eyes bent on us, and frequently interrupted our conversation, saying, "I know what you are talking about," and it is probable that he did.

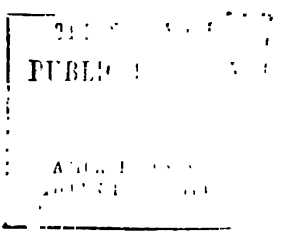
The night passed as nights generally do pass in a train where there are too many occupants of the carriage for all to recline, and the morning came and reminded us that

we had before us the ordeal of arriving at Pretoria. Of breakfast at Heidelberg I have no very distinct recollection, save that the coffee was indifferent and the butter very rancid; but these trifles were borne with complacency by our escort, who, I think, appreciated the full-flavoured lubricant to which we took exception.

The country was ugly, flat, and devoid of trees, and the train rolled along at a steady irritating pace, until by the hilly nature of the ground it was easy to tell that we were approaching the Boer capital. First a fort appeared frowning down upon us from a wooded hill on our right, then another on a similar feature to our left. Passing down the gorge between these two mute guardians of the city on this, its southern side, we clashed over some points and knew it was the junction of the railway to Delagoa.

A few minutes more and we were steaming alongside the platform of the terminus, the cynosure of all eyes; for a goodly crowd had collected to view the latest captures by the brave burghers at the front. Our journey to the metropolis of the South African

Republic was at an end, and nothing remained but to employ one's wits in devising the best means of completing the circular tour so unwillingly commenced. For that purpose, however, I recognised that a return ticket and a personally conducted journey were equally unnecessary and undesirable.





Majuba Hill from the south.—See p. 28.

II.

LIFE AT THE MODEL SCHOOL.

"All ye who enter here leave hope behind."

PERHAPS a few words regarding the seat of Government (or shall I say Misgovernment?) of the Transvaal, in which four weary months were to be passed, will not be out of place at this stage of the narrative.

Pretoria, named after Pretorius, the first governor of the South African Republic, lies on the northern slope of the Aapies, a small tributary of the Crocodile river. The town is regularly laid out in parallelograms, the sides which form them running nearly due north and south, and east and west,—a not inconsiderable advantage to those who may desire to find their way out of the city in some particular direction. The streets, which are of uniform width, are bordered

with magnificent willows, a tree in which the Dutchman delights, but which gives the whole town somewhat the appearance of a great necropolis. The town is brilliantly lighted by electricity, and the water-supply is excellent. The temperature varies from 89° Fahr. during summer to about 42° Fahr. in winter. Six forts of modern type encircle the town, constructed on a series of heights which serve to conceal its existence until the near vicinity is reached. At the foot of Signal Hill, to the south of the town, still stands "Jess's" cottage, described in Rider Haggard's novel.

The country round Pretoria is said to possess few natural beauties, but of these I am unable to speak with authority, having only seen a portion by moonlight, at a time too when my attention was fully occupied with matters which will be referred to later on.

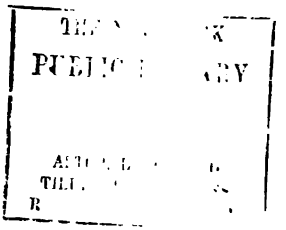
A few minutes after the train came to a standstill at Pretoria we were requested to alight. This was no sooner done than necks craned forward to obtain a glimpse of the new arrivals, and the camera fiend, ever

lying in wait for the unwary, began the operation of transferring our features to his film. Pressing my hat over my brows, I endeavoured to put my physiognomy as far as possible into the shade. A lane was cleared through the living mass, and, joined by an officer of the Natal Carabineers (a prisoner from Harrismith), who was privily informed of Brockie's deception, we were formed up in a small party; the men were in a larger. To my dismay, Brockie—with whom, during our journey, I had come to an agreement that we would spare the Boers in Pretoria the trouble of entertaining us for any length of time—was led off to prison by two plain-clothes policemen, while Churchill, conducted by a burly, evil-looking police official, left us to join the men. I remonstrated with this Jack-in-office—who, it is some satisfaction to know, is now in Ceylon in a similar position to ours at that time—and pointed out to him that a war correspondent ranked as an officer, and further informed him who this particular correspondent was. All the reply vouchsafed was, "We know and care nothing for your lords and ladies

here." I disdained further conversation with such a person. Like criminals we were marched off under a strong escort of police, but after a few yards I perceived a portly and still more ill-favoured-looking person, who turned out to be a certain Malan, field-cornet of Pretoria. Accosting him, I repeated my explanations, and was rewarded by Churchill joining us a few moments later. Some time afterwards we heard incidentally that when the first party of officers and men captured reached Pretoria, they were marched all round the town,—a trophy for the inhabitants to see. The Boers, however, were greatly disappointed that they were not wearing the red coats as in 1881, and complained bitterly that wearing khaki was not fair, it was "so much more difficult to see." The men were marched to the race-course, on the outskirts of the town, and, after passing along a few unfrequented streets, we arrived in front of the Staats Model School. On the verandah I noticed several acquaintances, and once inside the gate we were beset by inquiries as to how we were captured, what the latest news was,



Pretoria.—See p. 34.



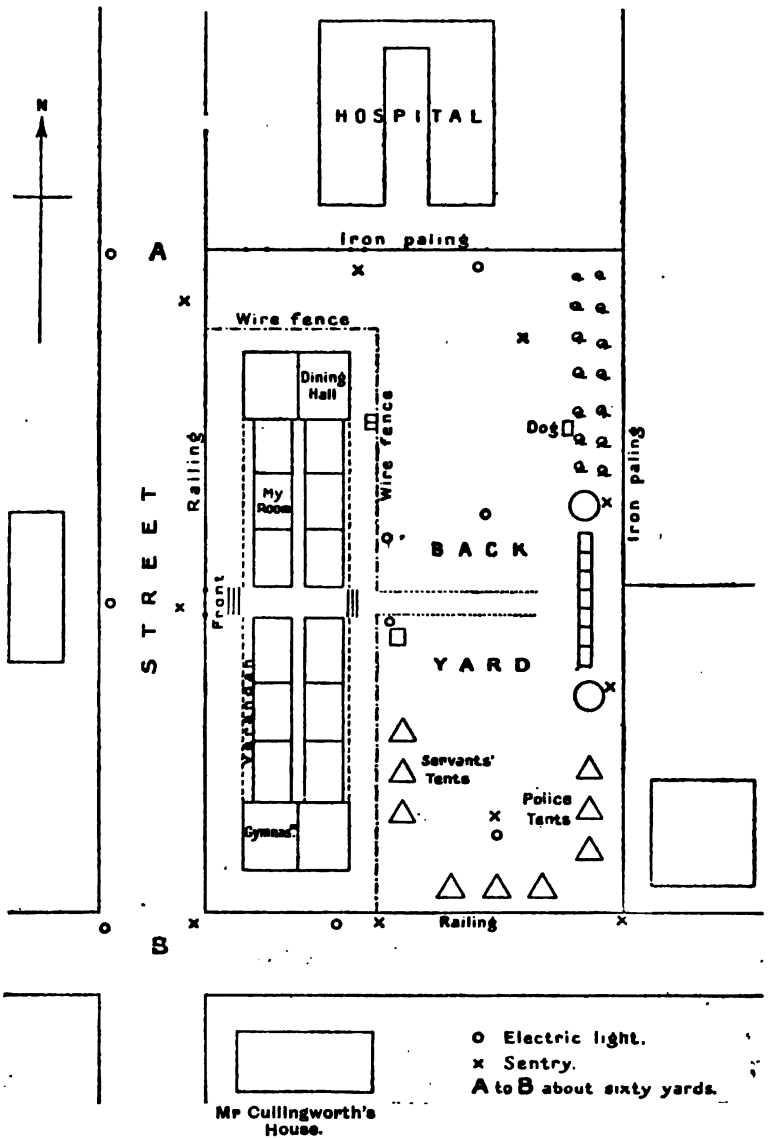
and where Buller and his army were. At this early stage of the campaign there was little to tell, and, tearing myself away, I speedily found some one who explained to me the routine of the establishment, and where one would sleep, and feed, and so on.

I regret that I must weary my readers with a somewhat minute description of the building and its surroundings, as it was from here that I made more than one unsuccessful, and at length a successful, attempt to escape. A reference to the accompanying plan will here and later help to elucidate matters.

The Staats Model School, a substantial single-storeyed red brick edifice, is built at the corner of one of the parallelograms into which the town is subdivided, its length running approximately north and south. It is, as its name implies, an educational establishment for the youth of Pretoria, and is divided into a number of schoolrooms and lecture-halls. It contains in all sixteen rooms in the body of the building, including two at each end. A long central passage runs almost throughout its length, terminated

by the end rooms, and across this is the passage from the front entrance to the door into the yard or playground. On both sides of the building is a verandah which extends along the exterior of the six central rooms, and this again is overlapped by the four end rooms. One of these end rooms is fitted up as a gymnasium, and another was used by us as a fives-court. Outside, a railing breast-high ran round the west and south sides, the two remaining sides being enclosed by a corrugated iron paling six feet and a half high. In addition to these, a wire netting ten feet high ran parallel to the paling but close to the building, and through this an opening immediately facing the back door led to the grass-covered back-yard. Across the yard, in which were the tents of our soldier servants and the police guard, were some low buildings, which at the time of our arrival were connected with the corrugated iron paling previously referred to. A double row of trees ran close to the eastern paling. At night this yard was lighted by four electric lights. On the two sides of the

PLAN OF STAATS MODEL SCHOOL, PRETORIA.



building which did not look upon the street were private houses in gardens, that on the north side being used as a Red Cross hospital, with a door of communication in the iron paling which opened into the school-yard. The houses across the streets were occupied. Our guard at this time consisted of twenty-seven men and three corporals of the South African Republican Police, which furnished nine sentries in reliefs of four hours. They were armed with Lee-Metford rifles and revolvers, and carried whistles. The rifles were not loaded, but each sentry wore a bandolier full of cartridges. Five of these sentries were posted outside the enclosure and the remainder within, and the public were forbidden to approach nearer to us than the opposite side of the street. No vehicle, horse, or bicycle was permitted to pass the school; and even dogs were driven away lest they should be the bearers of messages.

The town was guarded, principally for the protection of property and for the arrest of suspicious persons, by special constables, who were posted in every street, armed with

revolvers, and in some cases accompanied by their canine friends. These mounted duty at 6 or 7 P.M., according to the hour of sunset, and after 10 P.M. were entitled to demand passes from persons walking in the town. In the vicinity of the Model School they appeared to be exceedingly alert and vigilant, frequently signalling to each other with their whistles, and closely scanning the passers-by. Beyond them, again, were mounted patrols, who by day and night watched the main roads into the town, preventing the ingress and egress of persons unprovided with permits. No one not in possession of a passport could travel by rail, which effectually barred that means of exit to us.

The prisoners living at the school at this time consisted of the officers of the cavalry and mounted infantry captured at Dundee on the 20th October, those taken at Nicholson's Nek, and some stray prisoners taken at other times.

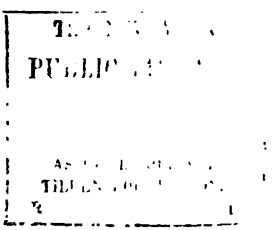
In charge of us were two officials—one a Boer commandant, the other a Hollander gentleman, Dr Gunning, who at the same time discharged the double functions of

manager of the Zoological Gardens and Curator of the Museum. The commandant was not exactly a pattern of every virtue, but the doctor, whose wife was an Englishwoman, was uniformly courteous, and did all that he could to make our confined existence as bearable as possible. Our daily routine reminded one of school, without work or common task to fill the hours which dragged so slowly by. Fortunately, however, we were allowed to join the Staats Library, from which a fair selection of books to suit most tastes could be obtained. This was indeed a boon to most of us.

The morning succeeding our arrival, Brockie, who had been successful in keeping up the delusion that he was an officer, and had evaded the pitfalls which the Pretoria landrost had prepared for him in his cross-examination, arrived at the school. He told us that he had been so fortunate as to find among the officials at the prison a Johannesburg acquaintance, who had recommended him to conceal the fact of his knowing the Dutch language. He was thereby enabled to prepare beforehand his reply to each question,

as the officials discussed in his presence and in their own tongue the interrogatory which they proposed to put to him.

To my surprise, for otherwise escape would have been made much more difficult, we were allowed to wear plain clothes, and were even provided with a suit and some other necessaries on arrival. The small party which arrived at the same time as I did were provided each with a ready-made suit of hideous mustard colour, quite unsuitable for passing through Pretoria unnoticed. We managed, however, by representing that the garments issued to us were not sufficiently large, to procure others of a more sombre and less conspicuous hue. An article of dress the acquisition of which was hedged in with difficulties was a suitable headdress. The authorities declined to provide us with or allow us to buy the slouch hat so universally worn in South Africa. Fortunately I had been given one by a railway employee at the time of the armoured train affair, having lost my helmet in that accident; and Churchill, shortly before his escape, borrowed that of the Reverend Adrian Hofmeyer.





The Staats Model School.—See p. 36.

Our meals were simple but sufficient. The Transvaal Government gave us a free daily ration of ½ lb. of beef, tinned or fresh, some bread, tea, and potatoes. As this was inadequate, a mess committee undertook the thankless task of feeding us at the rate of about 2s. 6d. per diem. Those who desired could purchase luxuries, and indeed almost anything but firearms, through a local dealer.

Space for exercise was limited, for beyond the small yard in which some played rounders and quoits, we were restricted to walking round and round the building, reminding one of life on board ship. A few of the more energetic spirits determined that their incarceration should not cause a deterioration of muscle, and formed a class to practise Sandow's exercises. At one time the feminine recreation provided by the skipping-rope became the fashion, and the inhabitants of Pretoria must have wondered indeed to see youths not long out of their teens and men of middle age nimbly hopping over the swinging cord. Inside we had the gymnasium and a room which was eventually used as a fives-court.

Chess, bridge-whist, "patience," and even halma, helped to pass the evenings and wet days. Those who had friends in hospital next door were permitted to visit them, and by this means we occasionally obtained some news of the outside world. The daily papers published in Pretoria and Johannesburg also were to be obtained; but their contents, coupled with the information which our jailors volunteered, were of a nature to depress one's spirits—always provided one was foolish enough to place any credence in them. I must not omit to say here that beer, on payment, was allowed, and that one might walk round the buildings as late as one liked, and sleep on the verandah. The inhabitants of Pretoria took considerable interest in us, and some amusing expedients were adopted to procure our photographs.

One day a cab drove up at an hour when, like wild beasts in confinement, we were walking round and round our cage: the window nearest to us was draped with black cloth, in which a small hole, pierced the size of a camera lens, was visible. This vehicle

remained some time, after which the occupant, having got all he wanted, drove off. Detectives were frequently to be seen watching us as we took our exercise, and taking down notes as to our appearance, gait, and so on. That their observations were by no means perfunctory, but attained to some degree of accuracy, will be apparent as my tale proceeds. Sunday, however, was the day of the week when we were most favoured. Towards sunset the youth and beauty (I can't say rank and fashion) of the town passed and repassed our scholastic retreat, some gazing on us with looks of sympathy, others as if they would be glad to have a shot at us through the railings.

I must not forget one young lady in particular, evidently of a deeply sympathetic nature, who, I heard, was named after one of those flowers which in heathen mythology was adopted as a disguise by some forlorn maiden pursued by the enamoured Jupiter. Beyond glances shot over the railing at twenty yards, she was quite safe from the inmates of our dwelling. It was said, and I believe truly, that after Churchill's escape,

when every English person in Pretoria was suspected of complicity, she was arrested by the unchivalrous Dutch, and though she could have rendered him no assistance whatever, was fined £25.

Looking over the railings, beyond the hideous and exasperating landscape of armed police, much of the town could not be seen. To the southward were the fortified hills through which we had passed at the time of our arrival, and between us and them ran the railway to Delagoa Bay. Being summer, the foliage of the trees effectually prevented an extended view, which might have given us a better idea of our surroundings.

The interest which Churchill's arrival had at first provoked had by no means abated, and he received many visitors with whom animated discussions on the all-absorbing topic of the war were engaged in. Some hope of release was held out to him; but the impression which had gone forth (an incorrect one) that he had borne arms against the Republic during the armoured train incident made that somewhat problematical.

The thought of evading the vigilance of the guard and making my way back to the front had scarcely for an instant been absent from my mind, and I was fully resolved to effect it at the earliest favourable opportunity. An attempt to bribe the sentries to look the other way, while one passed the barrier, met with no success; and although some months later I renewed it, offering a sentry who was well disposed towards us £100, he was not to be tampered with. He said that if I got out of the building I could never get out of the country, there were so many patrols and other precautions to prevent the escape of prisoners, and that in any case the sentries on his right hand and left would see, and not be silent. Another difficulty which presented itself, even had one succeeded in gaining over our amiable policeman, was the impossibility of being sure that he would be on duty at the best place of exit on the most suitable occasion.

Ultimately we came to the decision that outside assistance in getting out of the guarded enclosures was unattainable, and that we must depend on our own devices.

Various expedients whereby we might gain our freedom were considered, but none of these appeared easy when worked out in detail, and most of them exceedingly difficult and uncertain.

From the dealer, with whom, when the attention of the commandant could be temporarily distracted, a few moments' conversation could occasionally be snatched, we learnt that forged passports might possibly be obtained—for a price. Armed with these, we might succeed in quitting the country by rail; but our ignorance of the language, and the chance of identification by detectives at the station, did not recommend this venture to me.

The plan which Sergeant-Major Brockie and I at length evolved was to climb out of the enclosure at the place where the low buildings at the back of the yard were situated. The spot chosen was one on which the electric light did not shine; and provided the sentry, who generally stood close to this place, happened to move a few paces from it, no great difficulty was to be anticipated. Only one sentry could possibly see any one climbing over, and if his back were turned,

provided he heard nothing, his eyes would certainly be of no avail.

Once outside the yard, creeping through the adjacent gardens we could gain the streets, then the exterior of the town, and, following the railroad to Delagoa Bay, either board the 11.10 P.M. train (a portion of which consisted of trucks) at some steep gradient, or wait for it at Eerste Fabriken Station, thirteen miles distant. Travelling with it till close on daybreak, which would bring us near Balmoral (the centre of a coal district), we would hide all day, and at nightfall search for a coal-truck in the adjacent sidings. By this means, if successful, the Portuguese frontier might be passed.

It is perhaps desirable that I should explain that the night train from Pretoria went no farther than Middelburg, which is a few stations east of Balmoral; but by the time-table published in the papers we knew that even if we failed to find a coal-truck we should be able to board a train at night at Waterfall Boven, which place would have to be reached on foot.

The information regarding trains, special

police, and other details was gradually accumulated, and early in December the plan was ripe for execution.

On the 7th of that month two of our soldier servants belonging to the 18th Hussars succeeded in breaking out and escaping. They climbed over the offices at the back of the yard during the dinner-hour, a time at which the vigilance of the sentries was somewhat relaxed. I believe the police found out that they had gone, but thinking that they would not be missed said nothing about it to the commandant. The two soldiers, we heard afterwards, were caught at no great distance from Pretoria, and after being identified were lodged in jail.

The escape of these men made one feel that no time was to be lost, and all that was required was a slack and unobservant sentry, one who would during the dinner-hour move a few paces from his post and provide the necessary opportunity.

Up to this time Churchill, as I have said, had had some hopes of release, but on the 9th December he told me they were dissipated, and knowing that Sergeant-Major Brockie

and I intended to escape, he suggested coming with us. We consented, though the certainty that he would be missed within a few hours lessened the chances of success. As for Brockie and me, we knew that our absence would hardly be noticed, since at this time no roll-calls were held and no apparent record kept of the number of prisoners at the Model School.

We made a half-hearted attempt on the 11th, when matters were unfavourable, and on the next night decided to go if possible; but as the moon would rise about 7.45 P.M. and illuminate the dark spot where we meant to break out, the opportunity would, we knew, be a fleeting one. "There is many a slip," as the proverb has it, and Brockie and I were doomed to disappointment. Churchill saw his chance and took it, but when I tried to follow, the sentry, who now obstinately stuck to his post, saw me, and to go was impossible.

I will not dwell longer on this unsuccessful attempt, for on the principle that

> "Things without remedy
> Should be without regard: what's done is done,"—

the only course was to await events and adopt some other plan. We knew now, however, that escape by our first scheme was no longer practicable; and this was amply proved by the events of the following day, which I will leave to the next chapter.

III.

REVOLVING PLANS OF ESCAPE.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

In order to conceal the sudden departure of the special war correspondent of the 'Morning Post,' and obtain for him as long a start as possible, we made up a dummy figure which, placed in his bed, had such a natural appearance that early on the morning of the 13th it was invited to accept a cup of coffee by a soldier servant. No reply being vouchsafed, the beverage was placed on a chair. But our attempts to defer the evil hour of discovery were speedily frustrated; for a barber of the town, who, watched by a policeman, plied his trade on certain days in the school, came by appointment at 8 A.M., and failing to find his client, roused suspicion in the mind of his escort. These suspicions

were conveyed to Dr Gunning, who came himself to see what was the matter. I had endeavoured to get rid of the barber by telling him that he was not required that morning, but, unfortunately, he was an inquisitive, persistent fellow, who was unwilling to depart before earning his expected fee. Dr Gunning came and made inquiries regarding Churchill's whereabouts, but obtained no information.

At 9.30 A.M., when the commandant returned, a roll was called, and each prisoner's presence carefully noted. The fact of there being an absentee became apparent.

I knew that by this time, if Churchill had caught the night train, he should be at least fifty miles from Pretoria, and well out of the reach of any patrols which might be despatched thence. Steps were now undertaken for his capture; his description was telegraphed everywhere; and so great was the Government's annoyance at his escape and its desire to capture him, that the members thought of nothing else for some days, and the whole State machinery came to a standstill. Several policemen who were

supposed to have been bribed were sent to the front and replaced by others; many Englishmen's houses were searched; an English nurse in the hospital next door, falsely accused of helping him, was put over the border; and more than one arrest of persons supposed to answer to his description was made.

Next day Mr De Souza, Under Secretary of State for War, a Portuguese gentleman, told me that General Joubert had telegraphed from before Ladysmith to the effect that he was satisfied that Mr Winston Churchill had not borne arms against the Republic, and that he approved of his unconditional release. Mr De Souza added that his Government was now indifferent as to whether he was found or not, as in the former case he would be released.

I have so often since heard suggestions thrown out that Churchill was allowed to go, and that the Boers in any case intended to release him, that I feel it incumbent upon me to state that, in my opinion, nothing was further from their intentions. It requires no intricate process

of induction to conclude that such was the case when one recalls the extraordinary hue and cry which followed his departure, and the elaborate arrangements made to prevent a repetition of the occurrence.

An incident happened two days after Churchill's departure which would in any case have led to the discovery of my escape had I succeeded in effecting it. My cousin, Mr R. B. Haldane, with the assistance of Lord Rothschild, had managed to transmit a draft for £100 to me, foreseeing that it might be of great assistance in furthering any attempt to escape. The commandant would not trust it in other hands, brought it himself, and told me he had directions to give it to me personally and take my receipt. I tried to cash this welcome addition to my funds, and was told that I might bank it if I liked and draw upon it gradually, but that I could not be permitted to possess at one time so large a sum. Later on, however, during my journey to the border, I found means of converting the draft into a less portable but more profitable form. I believe that this was the only case in which money reached an

officer from outside sources while we were prisoners.

Many drastic changes now took place in the police and other arrangements for the security of the prisoners. By day and night sentries were posted in the adjacent gardens, and their numbers were for some days augmented from nine to seventeen. Roll-calls took place twice daily; beer, newspapers, visiting patients in hospital, walking round the building after 8.30 P.M., and sleeping on the verandah, were all prohibited. For a time we were subjected to many petty annoyances, which displayed to fine advantage the narrow-minded and malicious nature which actuated our warders.

Dr Gunning did his best to smooth our difficulties, but he ran the risk of drawing suspicion on himself by so doing. Public opinion in Pretoria ran in favour of very stringent measures, and the Government (which endeavoured to deserve the name of a popular one, with the Dutch at least) felt compelled to meet to some extent the wishes of the citizens.

Several detectives and the inspector of

police inspected the building and surroundings with a view to prevent a recurrence of the event of the 12th, and the result of their visit showed itself after a few days. The offices at the back of the yard, originally connected with the paling, were isolated, so that the sentries could pass behind and prevent any one from climbing over; the lower branches of the trees were cut off so that no dark place remained; and the reflectors of the electric lights were adjusted in such a way that no spot was now in shade. I shall refer later to two additional lights which were placed in the streets on the southern and western sides of the building, as they were destined to play a part in a future plan. The sentries, who now kept their rifles loaded, were placed under the inspector of police, a German; and every night that officer visited them without fail, and saw that they were thoroughly vigilant.

Up to the time of the incident I have just recounted, the Reverend Godfray, a Church of England clergyman, had held a service in the schoolroom on Sundays; but after Churchill's escape he deemed it wiser to

forsake us. I believe he thought that he incurred the danger of being suspected of complicity, and hence of being put over the border. Some of us considered his fears somewhat groundless, seeing that the commandant never left his side during the whole time he was engaged in his ministrations. Fortunately for us, the Reverend Adrian Hofmeyer, who had been most treacherously taken prisoner on the western border (I think through the instrumentality of Cronje), and in spite of ill-health had been kept for some time in a prison-cell, arrived to join our company. The commandant in charge of us would fain have induced him to play the part of *mouchard*, but he reckoned without his host. I feel sure that every officer who was a prisoner soon felt that in Mr Hofmeyer he had the staunchest of friends, and that a most loyal Englishman had joined our throng. Though cut off entirely from wife and family, and allowed to receive no letters from them, suffering no doubt from depression of spirits and ennui, he was ever ready with a kindly word and sympathetic look, which went far to mitigate the trials of our

confinement. His able and encouraging discourses will not readily be forgotten by some of us, and as I understand that he may publish them, it is not improbable that they may reach farther than was originally intended. At one time there was a talk of his release, but glad as we should have been to see this come about, many of us secretly hoped that he would not leave us.

About this time the party who had been captured with the guns at Colenso arrived, and from them we gleaned a good deal of news, which, since the newspapers had been forbidden us, we sadly lacked. Dr Gunning told me in confidence that a battery of Creusôt guns of the latest pattern had reached Pretoria *viâ* Lorenço Marques; and though I afterwards learnt that this important addition to the Boer armament had been smuggled through the custom-house in piano-cases, I have since been told that during the war only one case of that description crossed the border. Stories of the smuggling of contraband of war were very common in Lorenço Marques, and were spread by the Boers themselves with the

view of inducing our naval authorities to bring about international complications by searching the merchant ships of other nations which frequent that port.

For the first few days after Churchill's escape we occupied ourselves by noting the various alterations undertaken for our security, and in thinking out some new plan of operations. One day we made a raid upon some cupboards and broke them open, finding therein three screw-drivers, two triangular files, and a pair of wire-cutters. All of these were destined to be of service in the near future. Tales of escape from prison had always had a peculiar fascination for me, and I was as familiar with the true account of Latude's escape from the Bastille and Jack Sheppard's from the castle-ward in old Newgate, as I was with the fictitious escape of Edmond Dantés from the Château d'If. Our next plan was to be on the lines of the last of these.

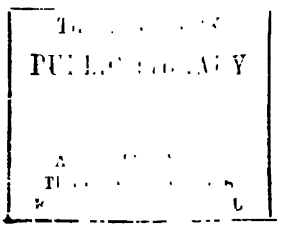
On first arriving at the school the idea of digging one's way out had presented itself to me, but as there was a prospect of escaping without going below ground, the subter-

ranean project was for the time being laid aside. I personally have always had a horror of being buried alive, and for that reason had avoided suggesting a plan which might involve such a contingency; but Brockie, who had worked in the mines of Johannesburg, had no such fears, and after debating the question we decided to put it in force. The occupants of our room (five in number, since Churchill left) agreed to try to burrow their way to freedom, and decided to start work forthwith. We invited Le Mesurier of the Dublin Fusiliers, my companion in our successful escape, to join us, and being of powerful physique he proved a most indefatigable digger.

On Sunday the 17th December we made a preliminary exploration to ascertain whether there was space under the floor sufficient to contain the earth we should have to remove in our operations. We had reasonable hopes that this would be so, for the Model School is built on a slope, and our room was towards what I may term the downhill end of the building. Before cutting through the floor we examined the



Model School (*back view*).—See p. 50.



planks, which were well laid and dovetailed, and to our satisfaction found a trap-door. Removing the screws which held it in its place, we raised it and descended.

As three of us were doomed to occupy this earthy chamber for nearly three weeks, I shall here give a brief description of it. The floor was about two feet and a half above the ground, and the space below, which corresponded with the room above, was divided into five narrow compartments by four transverse stone walls on which the cross-beams that carried the flooring were laid. Each chamber was about eighteen feet in length and three feet and a half in breadth, and there were man-holes in the walls. A certain amount of air came into this damp space through small ventilators under the verandah, but the atmosphere was very close, and one could not see except by candle-light.

We now divided ourselves into three reliefs, established a system of signals, so that the operators below ground might be quickly warned to pause in their labours should a stranger enter the room above,

and on Monday morning commenced work. It had to be carried out as silently as possible. The scheme was to sink a shaft about twelve feet deep by five in length and three in width, and from the bottom of this to drive a tunnel diagonally under the street on the western side of the building for about one hundred feet. This would bring us under a kitchen-garden, whence we could easily escape after dark, unseen. For digging implements we used our screw-drivers, and succeeded in breaking through some three feet of caked earth as hard as concrete. After this was penetrated the work became easier; but to our dismay, though not surprise, two feet deeper landed us in water. After many ineffectual attempts to get rid of it, by carrying it to the most distant of the five compartments, we found that the inflow, especially after rain, greatly exceeded what we could bale out, and our second plan accordingly fell through. It had been a work of considerable labour, armed as we were with such unsuitable tools, and the disappointment at having to confess ourselves beaten was

great. Some lines by Sir Walter Scott kept constantly recurring to me—

> "Patience waits the destined day;
> Strength can clear the cumber'd way;"

—and the word *impossible* was not to be thought of.

The numbers who were now incarcerated in the Model School had increased greatly, and Field-Cornet Malan, before leaving for the front, had started a scheme for locating us in a much more roomy place, which we understood was in course of construction and was approaching completion. We lay on our oars for a time, hoping that the new place might be more favourable to our plans than our present habitation, or that the sentries after a time might grow less vigilant.

In the mean time, much could be done which might prove of value in the future. Maps of the country between Pretoria and the border in many directions were made, and for this purpose we used Bartholomew's tourist map of South Africa, which one of the officers when taken prisoner happened to have with him. Brockie gave me some very

elementary instruction in the Kaffir language, and I wrote down several sentences which I proposed to pour forth at the proper time, though how I should possibly understand what was said in reply was a matter on which I did not care to ponder.

Christmas-day came, a dreary day for us and one on which many had hoped to be in Pretoria with a victorious army. Two English women employed in the hospital as cooks made us a present of plum-puddings, and the generous Transvaal Government allowed us each a bottle of beer, on payment.

We heard that President Kruger had received several Christmas cards from the Cape Colony and Natal, some of which had caused him considerable wrath.

I had hoped that at this usually festive season our guard might possibly depart from their persistent sobriety, and so give us opportunity to take advantage and escape; but whether it was owing to the lack of the necessary stimulant or that their sense of duty was too strong, no sign that they were in any way affected by the festival could be detected.

The days were now growing more and more monotonous, news was scarce and not encouraging, and beyond reports that we should shortly shift our quarters, and the occasional arrival of a prisoner, nothing occurred to break the unvarying sameness of our fungus-like existence. The possibility of organising a rising and break out of our prison had gone no further than the stage of discussion. The difficulty of obtaining reliable outside help and of procuring sufficient arms, and many other points, led to the final abandonment of the project.

All through January Sergeant-Major Brockie and I had kept watch night after night, between 7.30 and 8.30, thinking it possible to climb the railings and to slip past a certain sentry when his back was turned. I even went so far as to keep one of my coat-pockets full of pepper, a liberal dose of which I proposed to hurl into his eyes if perchance he looked our way, as I imagined that this substance would probably be more effective than the metaphorical dust. Fortunately for us, he never gave us the wished-for opportunity, for I am now con-

vinced that some other sentry would have seen us, and that we should not have got far.

At the end of January we were allowed once more to buy a daily paper, and to visit, under supervision, our friends in hospital. The news gleaned from the 'Volkstem,' a Government organ, was as nothing compared to a source from which we obtained the latest and most reliable information. It came about in this wise. We had noticed a man who occasionally passed the Model School, generally accompanied by a St Bernard's dog. From his manner he seemed sympathetic and anxious to communicate with us, and he sometimes muttered some words as he passed. As time went on he took to signalling to us by the Morse code with his stick. As the police seemed very suspicious of him, he could not send more than a word or two, such as "British victory." The sentries became more suspicious of him, and I believe he was told not to pass the school. For a time, at any rate, he rarely was seen. At length a system of communication was arranged with him through the medium of the hospital, and we found out that we were

indebted for our news to Mr Patterson, one of the principal telegraphists in Pretoria. Matters were soon on a better footing. Our sympathetic signaller took to visiting a certain house, inhabited by Mr Cullingworth and his family, and in the afternoon he sent many messages to us from the verandah. As, however, his duties prevented him from coming daily, and his presence at this house was calculated to arouse suspicion, he instructed two young ladies, who, we imagined, were daughters of our opposite neighbour, in the art of signalling, and they undertook the risky work of transmitting to us the news with which he supplied them.

The police were exceedingly suspicious of the house and of its inhabitants, and did all they could to ascertain what was transpiring between them and the prisoners across the street. But the system on which the messages were sent almost defied detection.

Standing well inside the door, one would signal with a white flag, while the other, seated on the verandah, gave warning when a sentry or passer-by was approaching. By

this means we now received, twice daily, the latest news, from the Boer point of view, of what went on at the front; and I believe that we were the recipients of the same telegrams which were laid before his Honour President Kruger. The same news was often served up in the daily papers in a very different guise; sometimes it was omitted altogether.

We unfortunates felt we owed a deep debt of gratitude to those who risked everything to give us news of what was going on in the outer world, a debt which it was impossible for us to repay. I am glad to say, however, that when Lord Roberts reached Pretoria he showed his high appreciation of what had been done for us by calling upon the Cullingworths and later on the officers presented them and Mr Patterson with mementoes bearing inscriptions indicative of the circumstances under which they came to be given. Shortly before I succeeded in escaping, Messrs Cullingworth and Patterson were commandeered as undesirable persons and sent to the front. Their last message to us told how they intended to cross over to the

lines of the British army at the earliest possible opportunity. They were not fated to succeed, were captured in the act and sent back to Pretoria, and there confined in jail until the British troops released them.

It is difficult to be certain of one's dates where no notes or diary have been kept, but I think it was early in February that twelve officers were allowed, on parole, to attend the funeral of an officer of a Colonial corps. On their way back they drove past the President's house and saluted him as he sat smoking on his verandah. The old Dopper statesman at once rose and courteously returned the compliment, raising his tall hat. This was the only occasion on which any officer, so far as I am aware, who was a prisoner in Pretoria saw him.

In the same month I happened one day to be leaning over the railings of our prison, ruminating on my hard fate and the difficulty of overcoming it, when I saw an unmistakable Englishman, accompanied by another man, of whom I took no particular note. They were passing by on the other side of the street, and their sympathetic

looks attracting my notice, I responded. As the sequel will show, I was unconsciously looking at the very two men who were soon to give Le Mesurier and me invaluable aid in our escape, and, strange to say, they had done as much for Churchill.

The time was now approaching when our last and successful bid for freedom was to take place. On the 12th February I had heard from Sir William Nicholson that, as I expected, there was no possibility of my being exchanged under present circumstances. This was no disappointment, but it made me decide that to wait longer was useless. Rumours of our moving to the new building were now of almost daily occurrence, and from a plan which I had seen, it appeared to be a place from which escape would be even more difficult than from our present dwelling.

The scheme upon which we now based our hopes was to induce the English electrician who was in charge of the lighting of the town, and also of the Röntgen ray apparatus in the hospital next door, to extinguish the lights of the school and of that

district of Pretoria in which it was situated, for half an hour on some dark night. We inquired of him through Major Adye, who was in hospital, if he would help without divulging anything. The reply came that, being on parole, he regretted he could not. We heard afterwards that if the lights at the school had been extinguished the search-lights in the forts would have been turned on us at once. This plan having so far failed, we decided to do the extinguishing part of the programme ourselves by cutting the wires which lighted the building and back-yard.

Four conspirators were engaged in this scheme. The general idea was to cut the wire on some dark wet night, and, silently crossing the yard with feet encased in noiseless india-rubber shoes, pass between the sentries and climb as quickly as possible over the corrugated iron paling, and so attain the yard behind the hospital. Thence the street could easily be gained; and at the worst, if discovered, we could make a run for it and try to pass the special police, reach the Aapies river some two streets off, and, fol-

lowing its course, come eventually to the outskirts of the town.

This project, I need hardly say, was a very risky one, for we had bound ourselves to stop for nothing once the light went out —our motto was to be *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.* If seen, we should have to run the gauntlet of two sentries a few yards distant, who would shoot at us without hesitation. There seemed no other possible way of baffling the guards, and the most dangerous way is generally the safest. We trusted that on the light being suddenly extinguished the sentries would not see well for some seconds, and that their surprise might distract their attention from us.

Brockie had noticed that once weekly on a certain night the sentries, instead of being relieved as usual at eight o'clock, continued their watch till midnight. We therefore decided that, other things being favourable, the preference must be given to this night, for it seemed probable that after so long a tour of duty the sentries might somewhat relax their vigilance.

In a place where we were so crowded, it

was extremely difficult to discuss our plans in secret, and indeed privacy was rarely to be found. In discussing our earlier plans, when the occupants of the school were considerably fewer in number, we were able to confer together in an empty room; but now all such questions had to be postponed till night, when we repaired to the gymnasium, at that time generally deserted.

Two possible means of cutting the wires presented themselves—one where they passed into the electrometer, which was fixed on the wall close to the front door of the building; the other by penetrating into the loft and attacking them at the spot where they passed through the roof. The first method was not considered feasible: the wires were at this spot extremely thick, and the place itself sometimes thronged with those going in and out of the doorway. The loft must therefore be invaded. To reach that place it was necessary to remove a heavy ladder from the gymnasium and by its assistance climb through a trap-door in the ceiling of the main passage. By this means we explored it on one occasion, but as a permanent route

it was radically bad. In order to succeed it was necessary to keep our arrangements absolutely secret, and this was impossible unless some other means of reaching the loft could be devised. At length a simple means occurred to me.

The roof of the gymnasium, which was of wood, had sloping sides, and by climbing to the top of one of the ladders a trap-door might be cut, and then we should have private access to the wires. I forthwith made a saw out of a table-knife, and the trap-door was cut and cross-battens screwed to it to keep it from falling out. In order to facilitate climbing over the iron paling, we prepared two plank ladders with padded ends: these we painted over with boot-blacking to render them inconspicuous.

Another important matter was the question of food. As we intended making for Mafeking, we expected to be several days on the road, and sufficient provision of a non-bulky nature must be carried. We double-lined our waist-coats, making numerous pockets therein, each of which would hold one or two packets of chocolate. Should we have to run for it, we

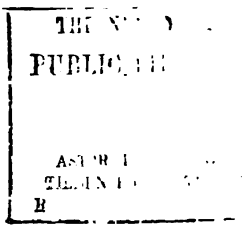
should be carrying weight where it would be least felt. These waistcoats, when completed and packed with chocolate, resembled in some degree those cork life-belts to be met with on board ship, and ere long they were to prove themselves veritable life-preservers.

I have mentioned before that two extra electric lights had been placed in the street, and these were outside our control. On more than one occasion I had made an inspection about 3 A.M., when all the lights in the building were out, and it seemed probable that they would have more effect than we had allowed for. One of them cast a beam into the back-yard past a corner of the building; while the other, situated immediately opposite the front door, sent a stream of light into the passage, if indeed it did not penetrate farther. Closing the door would have availed nothing, for above it was a plate-glass window. There were lights also in the hospital which were not beneath consideration, but as these were generally extinguished by eight o'clock, we could time our movements accordingly.

We had often remarked that no sooner had we got our plans well matured and every detail carefully thought out, than some new difficulty would arise. The present scheme was no exception. One evening I was sitting on the back verandah when the inspector of police arrived, accompanied by a very objectionable species of sentry—a large white bull-terrier. This animal was allotted a permanent post, to which he was chained day and night, close to where we meant to break out. He seemed to be a dog of discrimination, for he showed a violent antipathy to policemen and a most amiable disposition towards us. As the nights were cold, we represented that his health might suffer, and he was shortly provided with a rude kennel, which we hoped would have the effect of inducing sleep, and so reducing his value as a sentry.

But a more trying incident was to follow, and at the risk of boring my readers with details I shall record it.

One of the rooms of the school had been used as a store-room, and as this


THE N[illegible]
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R



"*We hold our breath as they approach the roof of our humble dwelling.*"—See p. 92.

was now required for other purposes, the stores were removed into the gymnasium. We were no longer masters of the situation, for the two officers of mercantile predilections who were in charge of this important department kept their office locked, and were frequently at work with accounts until a late hour. We managed, however, to secure a duplicate key of the gymnasium, which in some degree compensated us. Of course we could have taken the storekeepers into our confidence, but that was undesirable.

Shortly after this inconvenient removal, we discovered that our trap-door had been seen, and that the loft, like the cave of the forty thieves, had been visited by persons unknown. The knowledge that our secret was no more our own, added to the fact that some one, ignorant of our proceedings, suggested to me the very plan which was then so nearly ripe, made us decide to go at the earliest opportunity, for every day's delay presented the possibility of our being forestalled.

All was now ready, and a servant had

been engaged to cut the wires. He had been introduced to the loft, and instructed what to do on receiving a certain signal. The afternoon of Friday, 23rd February, was dull and threatening, and there was a possibility that we might have rain at night. The afternoon was passed in some anxiety. Our eyes were frequently directed towards the sky, and, like the prophets of old, we were filled with earnest hopes that a perfect deluge would fall. Provided there were no lightning, all might be well. Before going in to dinner our plank ladders, concealed between two folding-chairs, were carried out and hidden on the verandah, which was to be our rendezvous. The gymnasium was vacated and locked up for the night at 8.30, and our accomplice was duly consigned to the spot where his wire-cutters were to operate. A drizzling rain was falling, and the wind whistled through the trees—the precursor of a stormy night. The sky was covered with inky clouds, and the ground underfoot being damp, would deaden the sound of our footsteps as we crossed the yard. Fortune at last

seemed to smile on our venture, for the sentries were one less in number than usual, the absentee being the very one close to whom we should have had to pass. This seemed an omen of success. At nine o'clock the four conspirators assembled on the verandah, ladder in hand, ready to creep with stealthy steps to the appointed spot. It was an exciting time, the prospect of escape so near and so uncertain. I gave the signal, and the moments seemed like hours. Suddenly the lights in the building and yard went out, and like a flash we made for the gate through the wire-netting; but scarcely had we reached the barrier of wire when the buildings and yard were again illuminated. Yet even in those fleeting moments of extinction we had noticed that the yard was not quite dark. Back we crept to the verandah, imagining that our accomplice had received a shock which had disabled him, and had failed to cut the wire completely. Several minutes of suspense passed, and the sentries showed unmistakably that they were wondering what

had happened. The corporal went his rounds, and seemed to be discussing the eccentricities of the light.

After some time our accomplice came and told us what had happened. He had cut the wire, he said, completely through, receiving a severe shock in so doing, but after a little persuasion agreed to go back and complete the job by cutting the other wire. Unknown to me, one of the party told him not to operate until he again received the signal, and all waited for me to repeat it while I went through minutes of suspense which felt a lifetime. At length, however, our wire-cutter, growing impatient, returned and declined peremptorily to take further part in the proceeding. After a consultation we decided that the guard being on the *qui vive* it would be madness to cut the other wire that night and think to escape unseen. We therefore deferred the attempt till the next dark night.

Next day we insulated the wire-cutters with a silk handkerchief and some india-rubber, and obtained the services of another

man to cut the wire. But the next night and the next again were bright and rainless, and unsuitable for an attempt. Monday, the 26th February, came, the day preceding Cronje's defeat and the anniversary of Majuba. The 27th was to be kept in Pretoria as a day of humiliation, and not as usual of exultation. The President deemed that too much arrogance had resulted from the victory at Colenso, with the consequence that the tide of fortune had begun to turn, and that therefore dust and ashes were more appropriate to the 27th than beer and skittles.

About half-past five on Monday afternoon the electric lights in the back-yard, which together with those in the streets adjacent to the school were turned on some time before sunset, suddenly went out. The soldier servants, it was said, were kicking a football in the yard which had struck the wires and caused the mischief. To us conspirators what had occurred was plain: the wire, which no doubt had been only partially cut through, had fused. I heard afterwards that the English electrical engineer was sent

for, but said he could not come till next day. It was said that he suspected that the light had not gone out from natural causes, and that he did not want to spoil sport by repairing it. If this be so, we have a great deal to thank him for. Some workmen came and examined the wire at the point where it crossed over the street into the building, but neither there nor in the school itself did they find the broken place. During dinner a written request was passed round, stating that the commandant desired that we would not walk round the building that evening. On coming out from dinner, a visit to the back-yard showed what an escape we had had on the previous Friday, through the non-extinction of the lights. The two subsidiary lights in the street illuminated the yard to such a degree that any one crossing it was distinctly visible.

The question now arose, What was to be done? Report said that we were to be moved to new quarters in two days, and from there escape, we believed, was hopeless. The cut wire and trap-door would be discovered on the morrow, and as the latter

was in the quondam gymnasium, now store-room, the innocent storekeepers would be implicated. We should have to acknowledge that we were the culprits, and this would mean jail and no chance of escape. The situation was grave. To attempt to make one's way out by the back-yard, in which a bonfire had been lighted, was impossible, the sentries being doubled, and a Kaffir cordon placed outside them. We were at our wits' end. The last hope of regaining freedom seemed gone; yet there is almost always a way out of a difficulty, if only one can find it. Ten o'clock came and still we had not hit on any plan. Le Mesurier, Brockie, and I were seated in our room, our heads together in earnest confabulation. All of a sudden an idea struck me, and half-jokingly I told them what was in my mind. "Supposing we hid under the floor, do you think we should be found?" The words were no sooner said than both ejaculated "Of course!" and after a few moments' further conversation our decision was made. While they collected a few necessary articles, and with great difficulty

began reopening the trap-door, which had been tightly screwed down, I went round the occupants of the room, all of whom readily consented to preserve the secret of our hiding-place. What we three hoped for was that the Boers would think that we had taken advantage of the darkness, bribed a sentry, and so made off. This was exactly what occurred, and strange to say, despite the precautions taken by the commandant to prevent such an occurrence, he concluded that we had gone. For once the mistrust which one Dutchman has of another stood us in good stead. We had the satisfaction of baffling the whole talent of the Pretoria police.

The entrance to our hiding-place having now been opened, Le Mesurier, Brockie, and I descended to the scene of our former operations. The trap-door was secured, and nothing showed our absence but three empty beds.

IV.

GONE TO GROUND.

"Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre."

FROM the day on which we began the passive part of our escape, as I may term it, in distinction to the active part which followed when we left our underground dwelling, I kept a few notes, and as I brought them from Pretoria, it will be more convenient if I write this chapter somewhat in the form of a diary.

After going below the floor on the night of the 26th February, we prepared to make ourselves as comfortable as the surroundings would permit. We decided to sleep in the compartment which I have described elsewhere, next to the ventilators underneath the verandah, as here the atmosphere was not quite so close as in the other chambers.

We only possessed one blanket apiece, not daring to take more below with us for fear of arousing suspicion, since a person who was believed to have got clear away would hardly take all his bedding with him. The ground made a very hard couch, and this, added to the lack of fresh air and the excitement of the adventure, caused sleeping to be very difficult.

At length, after a night of continual turning over and over, trying to find a softer spot, we saw by the faint light which filtered through the ventilators that another day had come. This day, we thought, meant for us either discovery and imprisonment or non-discovery and escape. But escape was farther off than we supposed. Ere we shook the dust of Pretoria from off our feet, we had to undergo what it makes one shudder to recall.

It was now 5.30 A.M., and stealthy footsteps were audible overhead. It was the commandant going his morning rounds, and counting his charges as they lay asleep. A surprise was in store for him. Suddenly his footsteps ceased. In imagination we pictured what was occurring. He had reached one of

the vacant beds; he was looking at it in amazement. No dummy figure had been deemed necessary this time. His tread was heard again, and twice more it ceased as two more blanks were seen. Then came a sound of voices. He was inquiring from some drowsy mortal where the usual occupants of the vacant beds were. The conversation was of the briefest: what reply he got I do not know, so I cannot give it here; and perhaps it is as well, for the hour was early and the inquirer had no claim to popularity among us. Whatever was its nature, the sounds of his retreating footsteps were soon heard as he left the room. We knew and were satisfied that our absence was at least suspected.

The hours rolled slowly on. At 8 A.M. a roll-call took place. Our absence passed from the region of doubt to certainty. What would happen next?

At 9.45 I heard Colonel Bullock's voice bidding all go outside the building. A search was about to be made. An exciting moment was drawing near, yet we felt reasonably confident that our hiding-place would be

overlooked. Soon the tramp of many feet, "of armèd men the hum," resounds from the tiles of the passage. Nearer and nearer it comes; our hearts begin to beat a little faster. The door is reached, barred by the arm of no fair brave scion of the house of Douglas. In they throng, a posse of detectives and armed police, with but an inch of deal between them and their prey. We hold our breath as they approach the roof of our humble dwelling. The room above does not offer many hiding-places—no secret panel or priest's hole—nought but four bare walls, ten beds, a cupboard. Soon they leave. All the talent of the Vidocqs and Le Coqs (with apologies for the comparison) of Pretoria has failed to scent our lair. We breathe freely again.

The anxiety of our faithful comrades who remained outside was great, and their relief when they heard we had not been discovered greater still. After leaving our room the crowd of searchers hunted through the other rooms, and finding nothing of us, they repaired to the roof. Here our rude trap-door was immediately seen, and near it, left there

by accident, lay my saw. This was pounced on by Dr Gunning for the Museum, an interesting account of which appeared in the 'Strand Magazine' of April 1900. The break in the electric wire was also noticed. By 10.45 the search was over, and the usual occupants of the building were crowding in. Not satisfied with searching the school, several houses in the neighbourhood also were honoured with a domiciliary visit, and the same precautions to prevent our escape were taken as already described in Churchill's case. The conclusion arrived at by the authorities was that we had made our way out during the darkness of the previous night, and had gone to Mafeking.

Many months later the British Intelligence officer at Johannesburg, in looking through the police telegrams found there when that town was occupied by our troops, came across one which to me was of special interest, and which he was so good as to send me. It had been despatched from Pretoria to the police at Johannesburg as soon as our disappearance was discovered, and the translation is as follows:—

"8.20 A.M., 27th February 1900.

"Yesterday evening three officers, prisoners of war, escaped from the Staats Model School, viz. :—

"CAPTAIN HALDANE.—About 6 feet 1 inch in height, walks with a slight stoop, thin, complexion and moustache dark, wears a dark-coloured suit.

"LIEUTENANT BROCKIE.—About 5 feet 9 inches in height, erect, complexion and moustache fair. Has a habit of raising his eyebrows when talking. Has a long-shaped face, and wears a chocolate-brown suit.

"LIEUTENANT LE MESURIER.—About 5 feet 9 inches in height, strongly built, round face, complexion and moustache fair, small eyes. Wears a grey suit. Muscles powerfully developed, blinks his eyes."

I have drawn attention before to the fact that detectives were in the habit of taking notes on our appearance, and that they did so in no perfunctory manner is unquestionable.

Our first day under ground seemed endless. Putting our house in order occupied

but little of our leisure, and that done the spirit of unrest seized upon us, and till night came we sat listening on the tiptoe of expectation lest word that all were to be moved should come. When darkness fell we found it necessary to close the ventilators as best we could, which procedure, though it made our supply of air somewhat limited, removed the danger of our candles being detected from without.

The day after our supposed flight an account of it appeared in the local paper, the 'Volkstem.' It said that a Kaffir had found the remains of a roast fowl and a hat, some few miles on the Mafeking road, where we were supposed to have bivouacked, and thither the inspector of police and his myrmidons rode in hot haste. I hope some day I may find and reward that imaginative Zulu.[1] It was satisfactory to us to know

[1] The following appeared in the 'Volkstem' of the 28th February :—

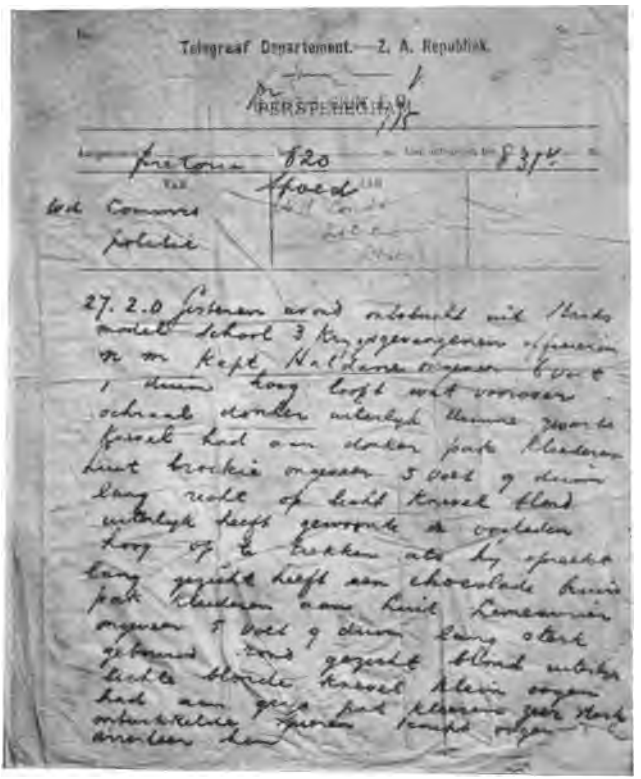
"*Escape of British Officers.*

"On Monday night three of the British officers, who have been for some time confined in the State Model School, succeeded in making their escape. They were at dinner last night, and were missed, we understand, only this morn-

how completely they were off the scent, and how remote from the building their thoughts were. In every room was a trap-door of exactly the same description as that in our own; but the authorities, after the first search, never for a moment wavered in their conclusion that we were outside Pretoria. In a few days after we were supposed to

ing. Their names are Captain Haldane of the Gordon Highlanders, Lieut. Le Mesurier of the Dublin Fusiliers, and Lieut. Brockie of the Natal Carabineers. The two former were, we believe, captured in connection with the armoured train incident, at Chieveley, at the same time as Mr Winston Churchill, and the latter some time before that. The escape was at once notified to the police-office on its being discovered, and every precaution is being taken in order to prevent the fugitives from getting out of the State.

"Yesterday afternoon a report was brought into town by a Kaffir to the effect that the three British officers who had escaped during the previous night from the Model School had been seen in the neighbourhood of Koedoespoort. When the news reached Lieut. Du Toit, of the police force, he at once went out with a number of his mounted men and made a diligent search of the neighbourhood in which the men were supposed to have been seen. They succeeded in discovering a spot where the officers had probably spent the night, and also where they had partaken of food, but beyond this nothing was seen of the fugitives. It transpired that one of the Hollander Guards from the town had seen a man who appeared to be acting suspiciously, and upon giving chase to him the man commenced to run, and endeavoured to hide himself in the bushes which are scattered about on the veldt. The pursuer managed to


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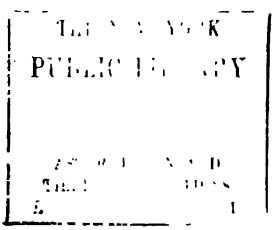
PERSTELEGRAM

Pretoria 820 $31½

Hoed

Kd Commis
Polisie

27. 2. 0 Gestuurd word arbeidt mit Hands
model school 3 Kaapgevangenen officieren
te wit Kapt. Haldane Engelsman 6 voet
1 duim lang kaal met vooraan
schraal donker uitslyk Kleine woorde
gezicht had een donker pak kleederen
Lieut Brockie engelsman 5 voet 9 duim
lang rooi of bruin kaneel bloed
uitslyk heeft gewonde a oogleden
long of te trekken als by spraken
lang gezicht heeft een chocolade kleur
pak kleederen aan Luitenant Lemesurier
engelsman 5 voet 9 duim lang donker
gebouwd rond gezicht bloed uitslyk
bruine bloede kaneel klein oogen
had een grys pak kleeren aan Hoed
onbekende Burgers konnen nogal
anderen dan


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have escaped, I was in some anxiety lest the guard, annoyed at their dismissal, should put their heads together, and, concluding that it was quite impossible for us to have slipped past them in the dark, demand that the school be searched again. I heard afterwards that the builder of the Staats Model School was a Scotsman. He must have known of the possible hiding-place we

get to within about a hundred yards of his man, when he was prevented from proceeding further by a barbed-wire fence. He stated that the man then made his way into the hill, at the right-hand side of Koodoespoort, but, after a diligent search, no traces were found of him. While conducting the search two Englishmen, connected with one of the local banks, were found amongst the hills. These men had applied to Lieut. Du Toit on the previous day for a permit to leave the town with their bicycles, but had been informed that they must apply to the field-cornet for such permission. This, it appears, they had not done, and as a result they were arrested on suspicion, and conveyed into town by a guard of police, where they were lodged in jail until the matter is investigated.

"The escaped officers seemed to have aided their flight by severing the electric wires in the roof of the building, for which purpose they had constructed a saw from a broken table-knife, and cut out a hole in the ceiling sufficiently large to admit the body of a man."

And in the 'Standard Diggers' News': "No further reports have come in regarding the three escaped officers, but important information regarding them has come to the Government."

occupied; but if he happened to be in Pretoria he kept his own counsel. I may here mention in passing that no restrictions were imposed on account of our escape, a matter of some satisfaction to us; but the tide of war was turning, and the victories of Lord Roberts were beginning to be felt. Ladysmith and its gallant defenders were relieved, or on the point of relief, and the Boers had given up hopes, so frequently expressed to me earlier by Dr Gunning, that the townspeople would live to see an army of prisoners led by a general, himself a prisoner, marching through their streets. The harmonium of which we had been deprived some two months back was now restored, and a piano promised. This day we heard that the move to new quarters was expected to take place in two days, and that Cronje and his men were prisoners.

Strange to say, all inclination to indulge in smoking had left me, and though Brockie consumed a vast quantity of cigarettes, I felt no desire to follow his example. An attempt I made with a pipe failed ignominiously, the tobacco being damp and seeming to draw to

itself much of the moisture of our earth-hole. Our matches, too, gave us great trouble, and if left uncovered for forty-eight hours would neither strike on the box nor anywhere else.

The complement of officers in our room was made up, but the two new occupants never knew that we were hidden below. Our accomplices above had managed things well. Without our principal ally, Frankland of the Dublin Fusiliers, who was taken prisoner with me, I don't know what we should have done. My only regret was that he was not with us; but we could not have dispensed with his help, for he was clever and reliable and full of expedients. He undertook our commissariat arrangements, and though our wants were not great, he and his assistants found some difficulty in satisfying them. Bread had to be abstracted by them in the view of all at meal times, and as the ration granted by the Boers was small, I fear that in their anxiety for our welfare they did not hesitate to stint themselves.

When we first went below we had to be on "short commons," but as we did not expect to be there long, and as the life was

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very sedentary, we judged it best to eat sparingly. For a day or two we fed on chocolate, jam, and potted meat, and a little biscuit or bread; but as time went on and we became more exacting in our requirements, we took the officer who presided over the stores into our confidence, and through his agency we lived in plenty. A bottle of cocoa as a night-cap was our greatest luxury. This had to be drunk out of empty tin jam-pots, for our table necessaries were of the crudest description.

A double knock, twice repeated, was the signal that the trap-door was about to be opened. It was under Frankland's bed, and could only be raised occasionally during the day, and then with great precautions. Unfortunately for us, one of the officers who had taken our place in the room above was of a somewhat slothful disposition, and passed the greater part of the day lying on his bed, which was next to the trap-door. Many a time his proximity to our line of communication made it impossible to send us our daily convoy of supplies, and various artifices had to be tried to lure him to a flank.

The "signalgrams" from the telegraphist and the daily paper reached us daily, and those in our confidence did all they could to make our existence bearable and to encourage hopes. Morning and evening, and sometimes oftener, our "post," which took the form of notes pushed through the chinks of the trap-door, arrived. How anxiously we scanned the writing to see if the verb "to move" was present in any of its tenses.

The theories of the other officers as to what had become of us were communicated to us by Frankland. All were very wide of the mark, and some so utterly absurd that they furnished food for laughter, which, however, had to be suppressed. But at times, when to control one's mirth was impossible,—for I had two Irishmen with me, and we felt the humour as well as the misery of the situation,—we would bury our heads in our coats and give way without restraint.

The most trying part of the under-floor life, next to the lack of fresh air, was the constrained position in which we constantly had to remain. To move about we had to creep on hands and knees. I don't know

what a "housemaid's knee" may be, but we all developed very delicate knees, after a few days, from creeping on the rough ground. Our heads, too, suffered a good deal from bumping against the beams and hitting hard walls in the dark. Lack of any kind of exercise, if one is not weak and ill, is more intolerable than might be supposed.

In order to preserve a respectable "going-away" suit, we donned, with some repugnance, certain garments which had been discarded and left below the floor on the conclusion of our first attempt to dig our way out. If they had been lying on a dust-heap in the open for months they could not have looked or felt more uninviting than they actually did.

Coughing, sneezing, or talking above a whisper was absolutely forbidden, for "love, a cough, and smoke will not remain secret." After a day or two we broke through the cross-wall and got under the next room, and there Le Mesurier and I took up our quarters. We had found that when all three were living in the same compartment the atmosphere at night grew close, and for other

reasons the additional space we acquired was very necessary. How we passed our time will not take long to tell. We generally tried to make our night last till 10 A.M., then had a little food; lunch at 1 P.M. over, we read or slept; food again at seven, cocoa, and bed. Not an exciting way of passing the twenty-four hours, but the only way.

Reading and patience filled the greater part of our time, and our friends above had some difficulty in feeding the hunger we expressed for literature. I give my warrant that every sentence was religiously devoured and not a word overlooked. One of the books which somewhat appropriately was sent us, and which I had not read before, was 'For Faith and Freedom.' I felt grateful to the author, for it helped admirably to pass a few of as weary hours as one can well imagine.

Unfortunately we had no means of washing, and to get a bucket of water through the trap-door was too unsafe. We had therefore to join the brigade of the "great unwashed" till better times. The noise of the occupants of the rooms above tramping up and down

was very trying, and I suffered much from headaches, aggravated by walking into cross-beams. Such was the damp that our boots, money-belts, and anything of leather, turned green in a night, and burning candles did not help at all in drying the atmosphere.

Six uneventful days passed. Though at first great hopes were held out of a move, they grew less and less as day succeeded day. We thought at first that a week would be about as much of this kind of life as we could endure. Now we hardened ourselves to hold out for a fortnight. We fully recognised that each day that passed would give us a longer start when the time to emerge from the school came; for the officials had no idea that we were in Pretoria, and our having escaped was becoming ancient history. This was almost the only consolation we could draw from the situation. One advantage, however, of our present life was the entire absence of mosquitoes. In the rooms above they had persistently annoyed us; here, with the exception of the homely house-cricket, no variety of the insect class thought us worthy of a visit. Except, too, when some heavy-

footed monster in the room above tramped loudly and directly overhead, we may be said to have enjoyed comparative peace and quiet, and privacy was always there.

My companions caused me no little alarm, for one was given to talking in his sleep, sometimes with vehemence and gesticulation, and the other snored. At the hour of the commandant's early visit I generally tried to be awake, lest the one should be holding forth, or the other trumpeting.

On Sunday, the 4th March, we heard that Mr Hofmeyer had taken as the subject of his sermon "Patience," and had otherwise specially remembered us. He did not then know where we were. On the 6th a catastrophe nearly occurred. Our rule was that when we moved for any reason from one compartment to another, the candle, if one were lighted, must invariably be extinguished. The reason for this precaution was that the flooring above us was near, and painted with tar to ward off white ants. On this day I had gone into the adjacent apartment to watch Le Mesurier playing patience, and had left a candle burning. After a time a

smell of burning attracted our attention, but we played on and thought no more about it. At length the smell got so bad that I looked where I had been and where Le Mesurier and I slept, side by side, and found his blanket and a corner of his coat in an advanced stage of smoulder, ready to burst into flames with very little encouragement. With some difficulty we managed to extinguish the burning cloth; but the whole space was now full of smoke, which was flowing out through the ventilators and into the open air in front of the building, not far from where a sentry stood. Hastily closing the ventilators with paper, we prevented them from becoming a source of discovery, and for a long time we sat in the stifling smoke, with smarting eyes, until it gradually became dissipated. No evil resulted from my carelessness, and Le Mesurier accepted the injury to his coat with equanimity.

On the 8th March we heard that no move was likely to take place, and that a few days earlier Le Mesurier and I had been captured on the Natal border. Things were now growing somewhat desperate, and even Mark

Tapley would scarce have felt cheerful under similar circumstances. Sometimes we felt a half regret that we had undertaken what was proving itself to be so futile and disagreeable an attempt to gain our freedom. Our friends above urged us to come up and live in the roof, or at least occasionally emerge into the room overhead and get some fresh air; but we set our faces against such proposals. The fewer who know a secret the better. Others would get to know it, and as many of the sentries understood English, they might easily overhear and understand some indiscreet remark as to our whereabouts. We hardened our hearts, and decided to remain where we were until the prisoners were exchanged, the campaign concluded, or ourselves too ill to bear it any longer.

Some twenty persons now knew where we were, among them Mr Hofmeyer, who supported our resolution to see the matter to an end of some sort. In a state bordering on desperation, I had written to him on the 6th and asked him to obtain an interview with Commandant Opperman, lead him to believe that the officers were about to

break out, and work on his fears to such an extent that he might be driven at length to recommend their immediate removal to the new habitation. I felt that it was possible that this representation might be successful; for Mr Hofmeyer being a Dutchman, the Boer commandant found it hard to believe that he could be also a thoroughly loyal Englishman at heart. Some weeks earlier, too, Mr Hofmeyer had mentioned to me that on first coming to the Model School Opperman had hinted to him that it would be to his advantage to play the spy upon us. These considerations led me to adopt this course, and that it turned out to be the best under the circumstances the sequel will prove. I think, to show how ably my coadjutor in this affair carried out my suggestion, I cannot do better than quote from his own interesting work, 'The Story of my Captivity in Pretoria.' He says :—

"I took our gaoler apart and said to him, very slowly and seriously, 'Remove us as soon as possible.'

"'Why?' asked he. 'The lights in the

new place are not in yet, and we can't get workmen enough.'

"'Well,' said I, 'hurry up—that's all I can advise you to do.'

"'But why?' asked he again.

"I looked solemn and grave, and said, 'Do you want to wake one morning and find yourself dead?'

"'What do you mean?' asked he, as his face visibly paled.

"'Half a word is enough to him of good understanding,' I answered.

"'But do you know or hear of anything —any conspiracy, any plot?' and beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

"'Certainly not, and if so I would assuredly not tell you; only I judge by the signs of the times—four officers gone, reverses for your troops everywhere—look out —move us at once.'

"Our guardian angel was now thoroughly frightened, and immense was the pressure brought to bear on the authorities and workmen. And we, too, were anxious to be away, as our quarters were becoming dangerously crowded, and we were told the new

quarters were so comfortable. What otherwise would have taken four or five weeks certainly was now accomplished in about seventeen days."

Mr Hofmeyer wisely did not tell me fully the result of the interview, no doubt fearing to raise hopes which might prove false. On the 7th I wrote again and more strongly, urging him not to spare the commandant, and to tell him that he might rest assured that his life would be the first to be sacrificed.

There had been a discussion among the officers several days earlier with regard to an offer from Mr Patterson the telegraphist, to assist from outside if they would organise an attempt to break out and seize the town. The project was put to the vote but not carried—rightly, I think. Winston Churchill had been greatly in favour of it when he was with us, but since the men had been removed sixteen miles off to Waterfall, the chances against carrying it out with a reasonable possibility of success were next to none. It was after this plan was finally shelved that I wrote to Mr Hofmeyer.

The shout of "Letters" which occasion-

ally reached us was very trying: we knew there must be some for us, but to claim them was impossible. They were, however, handed over to the American consul, and eventually fell into our hands at Lorenço Marques.

We had now several visitors at night in the shape of rats, who daily grew bolder, running over us as we lay, and at times upsetting tins with alarming noise. Our friend the white bull-terrier still kept watch and ward outside, and would have been of use now could we have borrowed his services.

On the 9th March we definitely heard that there was no chance of moving. Some time prior to this, and about the time we hid below, we had been told that the Committee who were supposed to look after our interests had condemned the new building as insanitary, and that the State Secretary, Mr Reitz, concurred in this opinion. President Kruger, however, considered it good enough for us; and as he had gone to the Free State to rouse the waning courage of the "brave burghers," we hoped that when he returned he would insist on his wishes being

complied with. There was no wooden floor to this building, and early in March it was rumoured that one was being laid. We now heard to our dismay that all work had ceased. The only chance left of the officers being removed was the arrival of more prisoners; and there was still room for some twenty more. There was the possibility of the Model School being required as a hospital, should the wounded from Volksrust and Bloemfontein be sent to Pretoria. Though things looked black, they had looked so before, and something might "turn up."

We heard that officers were trying to dig their way out in the manner which we had attempted in December, but that they had all struck water. Some were so indiscreet as to carry the water from the scene of their operations through the building, and empty it outside in view of the sentries, and the noise they made as they dug was heard outside distinctly. We knew that should the authorities be warned the whole building would be searched, and our discovery would be certain. All this caused us a good deal of

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Officers leaving the Model School.—See p. 126.

worry, which, added to our wearisome life, did not make it more bearable.

March 10.—We decided that, if only for the sake of exercise, we must do something. The only thing was to dig. A reference to the plan of the building will show that the end room on the north side was not far from the hospital. We resolved to get under the floor of this room and drive a shallow tunnel under the pathway, on which the prisoners took their exercise, into the yard of the hospital. A shallow tunnel above water-level, well shored up with timber, would be safe, and we could break out after the eight-o'clock relief had been posted.

When our first plan of digging had failed, we had thought of the plan we were now considering; but as at that time the police were quartered in tents in the back-yard, and in order to get from there had to pass through the gate into the hospital, near where our exit-hole would come, we had not carried it into effect. Now the police tents—probably owing to Mr Hofmeyer's interview with the commandant—had been

removed and pitched in the street south of the Model School, outside the yard, and the hospital-gate was not used after dark, except for the marching in and out of reliefs. The plan was now, therefore, feasible. We had our old tools with us, and arranged with our friends above to collect all the wood they could find — shelves, umbrella-stands, &c.—which would be required for the tunnel. We also ordered a saw and a hatchet, which were supplied: they were supposed to be for use in the kitchen. Some other officers who had discovered that we were still hidden in the school, had hit upon a plan similar to ours. Three of them, passing under the floor of their own room by means of the trap-door in it and creeping under the adjacent rooms, at length penetrated to our lair. We discussed with them how best we could combine and divide the labour so that the work might proceed more quickly; but for some unknown reason, after one day's work, they decided not to continue, and we were left to our own devices.

March 11.—Le Mesurier and I broke

through the two-foot cross-wall into the end room after some four hours' work. We had some difficulty in getting through, as we had to work silently, so as not to be heard above. We thought that if ever the authorities found that we had been below, they would have their work cut out to restore matters to their original condition. Emerging into the first compartment of the end room, we crept through the man-holes, till we reached the outer wall. The ventilators here were only as long as the thickness of the wall, there being no verandah. We closed them all up, lest, should we work at night, the light of our candles might shine through.

Our scheme was to dig about four feet and a half down, then drive a tunnel about thirty feet long into the hospital-yard. We calculated that if we laboured hard we might complete the work in a fortnight. This day and the next we dug every moment we could, getting down some way in the hard earth, similar to that which we had before encountered.

Our tools had been augmented by a pick, but in using it we made so much noise that we had unwillingly to lay it aside. We found that a bayonet and a steel skewer were the best implements.

Some of the officers belonging to our own room offered to take part in our mining operations, and they and Frankland gave us valuable aid. I am again tempted to quote, this time from Mr Winston Churchill's interesting work, 'Ian Hamilton's March,' in which he includes Frankland's diary of a prisoner. The latter vividly describes the feelings which another officer and he experienced on their first visit to our "catacombs." "On going down by the trap-door he remarked what an awful hole it was. Suddenly, in the flickering candle-light, he saw a gaunt, bearded, unwashed face and a half-naked body. At first he could not make out who it was; but when he at last realised it was a brother officer, he said you could have knocked him down with a feather, had it not been that he was already crawling on his stomach. The new shaft is a long

way off: when I went down I had to crawl on hands and knees along passages and through man-holes, backwards and forwards in a regular maze of compartments, and indeed, had the candle gone out, one could easily have been lost. Haldane looked very ill, but the others, except for being covered with dirt, seemed well enough."

On the afternoon of the 12th we heard that the officers in the room above us were complaining that they were disturbed by the noise of digging under their room, and that evening an order was given out that as the police were growing suspicious such work must cease. The conclusion we came to was that it was the noise and not the police that had given birth to the order, and we determined to continue work.

This night I dreamt in a singularly vivid manner that some one came to me and told me not to be anxious, as we should succeed in escaping; and when I woke in the morning the feeling was strong within me that the shadow of

coming events had been cast upon me in the night.

March 13. — News of the capture of Bloemfontein came. On the previous evening we had decided to try an experiment to soften the hard earth, and had emptied half a dozen bottles of water into our shaft. On going there this morning we found that it had had excellent results, and the ground was much less refractory. We got on famously, and the exercise did us so much good that we felt different beings. We now had strong hopes of escaping. These had been a good deal crushed by recent events, and now began to reassert themselves. We found that with care we could dig out the hard earth with little more noise than a rat makes in scratching a hole, and quite as fast as before we had watered it, when we had worked regardless of noise.

March 14.—We managed, when the two officers in our room who did not know we were below happened to be out of it, to get down a bucket of water, and perform some much-needed ablutions. Digging in

a close atmosphere is not a cleanly operation, and the inside of the lid of a tin biscuit-box showed us what dirty objects we were; but after the use of the contents of the bucket we became recognisable. The life was beginning to tell on us, and our unshaven faces looked pale and thin. Most of this day was spent in digging; but our hands were bruised and blistered, and we did not make much progress. In the afternoon we got a piece of news which raised hopes in our breasts, but lest they should end in disappointment we tried to stifle them. A certain commandant had made an inspection of the school with a view to ascertaining its suitability for a hospital. We had, of course, no two opinions on that matter. To us it seemed an ideal building for the purpose, more particularly since it adjoined the Red Cross Hospital. It would do the Boers no harm to occupy a building where we had been living for nearly three weeks under the floor! Our allies were unable to discover what this commandant's opinion was. To have dis-

played too much interest would have awakened suspicions. At last we had a peg on which to hang the worn-out remnant of our hopes.

March 15.—We continued our mining operations, and by night had far better news than we had dared to hope for. All day we had displayed less vigour in the work: a presentiment that our digging would again be fruitless must have seized us; indeed, we only worked from 11 A.M. till 1 P.M. At 3 o'clock we overheard some one use the word "move," and soon other remarks of a similar tenor caused us to listen intently. At any time it was difficult to hear what was said in the room above, unless it was shouted, and on this occasion we could detect no more encouraging words. At 4.30 P.M. we were in full possession of the excellent news. A note came down, in which we read with feelings indescribable, "We move to-morrow after breakfast. Patience has carried the day: you deserve your luck."

We had been seventeen days and nights below, and had still some twenty-four hours to pass. But the danger of discovery from

internal causes was not yet over. Knowing that many officers, who did not know that we were in the building, had been digging, we were strongly of opinion that some of them would hide below to-night, thinking to escape after the move. That this was the case was soon ascertained, and word was sent to me that the same officer who some time previously had unconsciously penetrated our plan of cutting the wires was now encouraging a wholesale descent below the floors.

As no officer had yet escaped from the Model School, I sent word to Colonel Hunt, R.A., saying that we had been hidden below for seventeen days, and that if any others hid at the eleventh hour, without cutting the electric wires as we had done, and so making some pretext, discovery for all was certain. I begged his assistance, and he came to the rescue in a way which made us feel most grateful to him. I was informed that he saw the senior officer of each room, and told them that there must be no hiding in the building, and that if any one in their room was at all recalcitrant he would see him,

and explain the why and the wherefore. I believe that six officers waited on him, and were told in confidence that we were still in the building. In spite of this assurance we spent an anxious evening, feeling uncertain whether some adventurous spirit would not perhaps defy authority.

As regards our food arrangements for the coming journey, we had between us 7½ lb. of chocolate, half-a-dozen tins of Brand's essence, and four small tins of meat lozenges. We had also a very little biltong, of which we could have got plenty more, but we were dissuaded from carrying it by Sergeant-Major Brockie, who told us that it was only eatable when cooked. We knew later that it is always eaten dry, and deeply regretted not having brought more. Our allies, as soon as the orders for removal had been received, had sent down large supplies of tinned and potted meats, biscuits, and suchlike; but all these we had reluctantly to leave behind. To carry them would have added to our weight, and a parcel might attract attention in the town.

We had decided to go to Mafeking for the

following reasons. Churchill had given an account of his escape in the papers, which, though I now know that, for obvious reasons, the facts were not fully stated, was sufficiently in detail to make the Delagoa route unsafe. We were supposed to have gone to Mafeking, and as eighteen days had elapsed since our supposed escape, all search would have ceased. Mafeking was the nearest spot where fighting was going on, and we would chance three extra or rather famished mouths being unacceptable to the garrison.

All of us had maps of this route and of several others which we had drawn. In case the main doors were locked, we had provided ourselves with the keys of two rooms which looked out on the back-yard, and in which the windows were broken. After arranging a code of signals for the morrow, the trap-door was closed and all chinks carefully filled up with putty, and false screws put into the screw-holes. The whole, no doubt, looked most innocent.

It may interest those who play "patience," a game I only learnt for the nonce, and shall probably not play again till I am next in

prison, to know that this day, before the news of the move came, I did the "demon" five times out of six, and Le Mesurier did it three times in succession. It was the 15th of March —the Ides of March had come, and the omens were favourable. But as the Scots say, "Them as follows freits, freits follow," and I wanted something more material to go upon than the fall of a card. I should have mentioned that in addition to food we carried some money and other odds and ends. Cheques up to £10 could be cashed in Pretoria by a confiding agent.

After making all arrangements for the following day, Le Mesurier and I made our way under the floor of the dining-room, where we sat for some time enjoying Mr Hofmeyer's fine voice, accompanied by the harmonium. I felt certain that it was due entirely to his representations to the commandant that the removal was about to take place, and later I learnt what confirms me in that opinion; for the Boers never used the Model School as a hospital, but left it unoccupied till it was utilised for that purpose by Lord Roberts' army. One of the last things I did that night

was to send him a letter containing the grateful thanks of those whose freedom was so near; and Mr Hofmeyer still, I believe, preserves this memory of a trying time.

Friday, 16th March.—Day at length came, a day that will live long in the memory of my two companions and myself. For the last time we heard the commandant going his rounds, and wondered anxiously if all were present. By 7 A.M. we had not heard of any one having hidden, and all seemed busy packing. Breakfast at 8, and then the prearranged signal was heard, and we knew that all were present. A little later we heard Frankland's voice saying, "All's well; good-bye!"

We now moved under the end room, and opening one of the closed-up ventilators, sat looking at what we could see of the prospect outside. The inspector of police, the commandant, and Dr Gunning were bustling about, looking extremely important, and waggons were arriving for baggage, and, after loading up, moving off. There was no mistake about this being a general move. All was proceeding exactly as we wished. The lady of the £25 fine passed by, looking as

sympathetic as ever. By 10.15 all the officers had left the school, and no doubt were wending their way to the new habitation a mile off. We noticed that they were unaccompanied by a guard, so assumed that they had been granted parole for the occasion. The servants were still busy taking to pieces and loading beds. The din was very pleasant to our ears. A party of native convicts arrived, evidently to strike and remove the tents of the police.

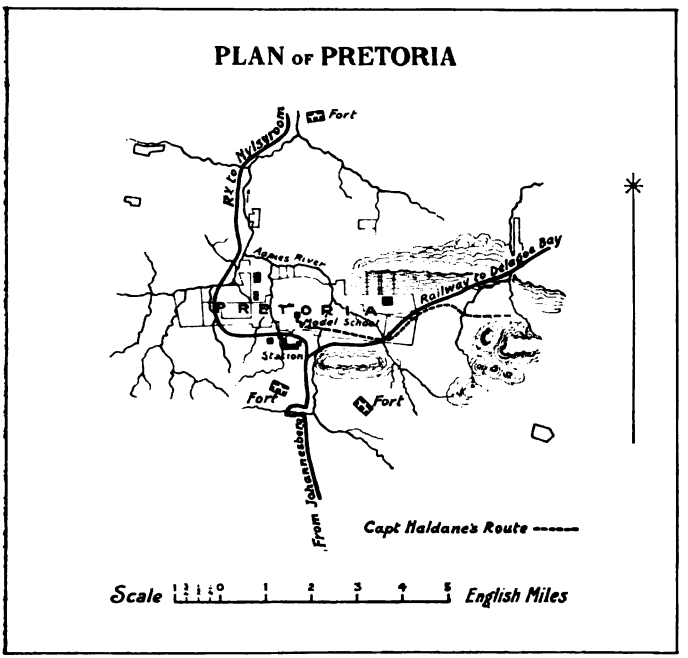
About 12.15 P.M., all the baggage having left, the servants were marched off, and the sentries—their charges having gone—quitted their posts. To make sure of this, I made my way round through the man-holes to the opposite side of the building. We then crept back under our own room, and as we were about to have some food, a number of policemen were heard above us in fits of laughter at the caricatures of President Kruger and others drawn on the wall by Frankland. At that time we did not know the reason of this merriment; but later on, when we emerged into the room above, the whitewashed walls, on which the moon was shining, plainly

showed the cause. From then till 3.45, when the building became quieter, troops of people,—men, women, and children,—and also dogs, kept visiting the room above, and the sounds of hilarity continued. As the principal drawing, one of Lord Roberts personally pursuing the President from Bloemfontein, was on the wall immediately above the trap-door, no longer hidden by a bed, that entrance to our den was fully exposed to view. At 5 P.M. the last visitors arrived, and after they left the building was deserted.

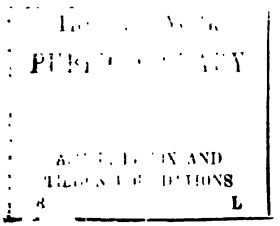
I have said that we had decided to go to Mafeking; but, thinking that after the period of inaction we had undergone the walk might be too much for us, we decided to go to Delagoa Bay, as by that route we might get a train. In December, before Churchill's escape, I had got temporary possession of a guide-book of the Delagoa Bay Railway, and had committed to memory, in order, the thirty or forty stations on the line, the height of each above sea-level, and its distance from Pretoria. We had fairly accurate maps of the route, which seemed quite familiar

to me. At six o'clock we had our final meal, and afterwards dressed for the journey.

It had been a bright and sunny day, it would not be dark before 6.30, and there would be a moon. The end of our passive and the beginning of our active escape had come; but we experienced none of those feelings said to seize upon prisoners long confined, of regret at leaving their dungeon. Our one desire was to find ourselves upon the veldt.


PLAN OF PRETORIA
Fort
Rd to Wilgerbosch
Railway to Delagoa Bay
Model School
Station
Fort
Fort
From Johannesberg
Capt Haldane's Route
Scale
English Miles

See p. 132.


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V.

ON THE VELDT.

"Unhook the west port and let us gae free."

THE moment for our "moonlight flitting" had arrived. All above seemed still and deserted, but lest we might be mistaken we listened intently for some minutes. Sergeant-Major Brockie, who was deputed to reconnoitre the building, to make sure that no caretaker had been left in charge, now pushed up the trap-door; but so firmly had it been fastened down the previous night, that despite the greatest care he was unable to prevent it from making a loud noise, which echoed in the deathlike stillness. Creeping into the room above, he made his way out through the doorway into the passage, and shortly returned to say that all was clear.

Le Mesurier and I followed, carefully shutting the trap-door after us. We were astonished to find how weak the confinement and cramped position had made us. Le Mesurier's legs gave way and he fell down; and all of us, when we tried to walk, reeled like drunken men. Several minutes passed before we dared leave the room, and it was not till we were some distance from Pretoria that our limbs regained their wonted strength.

Leaving the room which we had lived in and under for four months, and threading our way with care along the passage, which was blocked with forms, we reached the back-door which opens on the yard. It was locked, but the absence of a large pane of glass, which had been broken and completely removed, provided an easy exit. Strange to say, after my long incarceration I felt almost reluctant to go forth into unknown dangers and difficulties; but such a feeling was of brief duration, and this no time to moralise. We now put on our boots, which we had been carrying, and passing through this opening gained the

verandah. Pausing for a moment to see that no one was in the yard, we crossed over to the low buildings on the other side. The moon was full, and the electric lights not being turned off, as we had anticipated they would be, we felt unpleasantly conspicuous. The dog's kennel was in its usual place, but fortunately the occupant was gone.

We had intended to leave the yard by climbing over the iron paling into the next garden; but the moon was far too bright for this, and the windows of a house which looked on to the garden were open and some people were looking out. We therefore made our way to the railings, near which the police tents had been, and climbing over reached the street on the south side of the school. A couple happened to pass, just after we had got into the street, but they took no notice of us, and Le Mesurier told me afterwards that a special policeman slowly turned the corner of the Model School at that very moment.

Crossing the road, we went up the street

which leads towards the fort guarding the southern entrance to Pretoria. Of the town itself we had a small scale plan,[1] which many months before we had removed from a biography of President Kruger, a book belonging to the Staats library. I stopped to light my pipe, and Brockie, keeping in the shadow of some trees, donned a white sling in which to place an arm, and this pious fraud, supported by his wearing the Dutch colours round his hat, gave him the appearance of a wounded Boer. We next bore to our left, then to the right, and finally struck a road which, from the plan, we conjectured would cross the Delagoa Bay Railway.

Brockie had warned us both that if we wanted to escape notice we must slouch along with knees bent and backs rounded, as is the manner of the Boer. This to me was somewhat difficult, for the exquisite sense of exhilaration which I was experiencing made me feel much more inclined to run, jump, or indeed do anything but walk soberly along.

[1] See Plan, p. 128.

So far, although we had passed a few special policemen, our appearance had seemed to attract no particular notice. In the Transvaal, as in many other parts of the world, the country bumpkin, when he honours his county town with a visit, puts off his workaday garments and comes in his Sunday best. Our garb could scarcely be said to come under the latter heading: we looked more like three moonlighters than anything else I can think of. Fortunately for us, the town had been depleted of many of its inhabitants, most of whom were at the front, and in consequence the streets presented a very deserted appearance; and although we knew that the Dutchman is abominably inquisitive, yet we hoped to evade his notice. Le Mesurier and Brockie kept to the middle of the road. I followed them on the pathway, a little behind. In this fashion we were tramping along towards the outskirts of the town, with the villas in gardens on our right and left, when we met a special constable. This one, instead of passing us as the rest had

done, stopped, and turning round scanned us with suspicion. I expected every minute that he would ask us in Dutch who we were and whither we were bound. But Brockie, having noticed that we were running the risk of being challenged, turned half round, exposing to view his quasi-wounded arm. This seemed to partly satisfy the guardian of the peace, for he turned up a side street, stopped to have a good look at us, and ultimately moved off, unaware perhaps that

> "Them as is watched out of sight
> Bide away for many a night,"—

which proved to be the case. Perhaps he thought discretion the better part of valour, for we were three desperate men, and he was alone, with no help near. Whatever may have been his motives, his action was fortunate, for we were prepared to go to any length to avoid a hue and cry. Brockie had vowed that nothing would induce him to be captured a second time, and had armed himself with a sausage-shaped bag of cloth filled and

jammed tightly with earth. He was burning to use it on some one, and must have lamented this lost chance.

The road along which we were travelling now began to leave the town, and the gates of a level-crossing, betokening the presence of the railway, were plainly to be seen. We halted for a moment to consider whether it would not be wiser to turn aside and avoid a spot where a patrol might possibly be met; but our anxiety to get clear of Pretoria without delay overcame the inclination to make a detour, and pressing on, we found that nothing barred our way. Crossing the railway-line, we sat down in some long damp grass to decide whether we should follow road or railway. I had a small medicine-bottle full of whisky, presented by a fellow-prisoner as a parting gift. The occasion was not one to be overlooked, and we proceeded to drink success to our venture; then, having decided to take the railway as our guide, we set off again, and found we were clear of Pretoria and its suburbs.

I inwardly congratulated myself that now no officer or man who wore the Gordon

tartan was a prisoner in the hands of the Boers. But we were not yet out of the wood.

Straight before us, high up in the eastern sky, shone the moon, dimming the brilliancy of the evening star which followed closely in her wake; to the right the Southern Cross, and low down in the north-east Orion's Belt. With guides like these, to lose ourselves would not be easy. Reaching the railway, we walked along in single file, halting now and then to listen and make sure that all was clear in front. A coal-train from Balmoral, going westward, passed us, and soon after we had to throw ourselves down in a ditch beside the line to conceal ourselves from a Dutchman going home off bridge-guard,—for every bridge and every culvert from Pretoria to Komati Poort had its guard by day and night. These guards (we were afterwards told) had orders to fire on any one walking on the track at night.

When we had gone about three miles, and were covering the ground at a good rate, we almost walked into the arms of a sentry who was sitting on the parapet of a bridge which

carried the railway over the road. We came upon him suddenly, as he was sitting partly hidden by a bush, and walked to within a few paces from him; and that he did not see us, unless he was asleep, is a miracle. We dropped like stones beside the rails, lay absolutely still for some moments, then softly crept back down the slope of the embankment in the direction whence we had come. Then along a muddy ditch until we had lost sight of him, climbed a barbed-wire fence beside the railway, which shook and rattled, after which, making a wide detour, and creeping through a mealie-field to avoid a Kaffir kraal, we passed along the face of a hill and found ourselves close to a telegraph-wire. This wire, we discovered later, ran like a Roman road over hill and dale to Komati Poort, and had we followed it we should have made our journey many miles shorter, and escaped the annoyance of losing our way in the dark. All around us dogs in the neighbouring farms were baying loudly at the moon, and this, and occasional shouts from afar, made us hasten on our way. We now followed the wire for a

couple of miles, but thinking we were going out of our way, we left it and climbed a rocky ridge not far from Koodoespoort, where Churchill had caught the train when he escaped. Below us we heard the sound of running water. Hastily making our way to it, for we were growing thirsty, we came upon a muddy stream evidently used for irrigating the fields on the hillside, down which it flowed.

Unfortunately at this juncture Le Mesurier, who had got off the path among some rocks, twisted his ankle. Painful as it was, to walk on, however slowly, was better than to rest, and so allow it to grow stiff. Pluckily recognising this, he kept moving forward, and we made some progress, though slow. Our way led us over the open veldt, where the grass was long and wet. Brockie was growing tired, and insisted that he saw Boers under every tree and bush, and for some time we moved with great caution. We again struck the railway, crossed it, and a black patch in the distance told us we were approaching the first station, thirteen miles from Pretoria, and decided to halt

there till next evening. I felt a good deal disappointed at covering so short a distance the first night; but it was no one's fault, and it was as well, perhaps, not to walk too far at first, for we were not in the best of training just then.

Reaching Eerste Fabriken, our farther progress was barred by a ditch some fifteen feet deep, with just beyond it a sluggish muddy river. Hunting up and down the ditch, we at length found a spot where, hidden by the thick bushes, it gradually sloped up to the ground-level. The bottom was damp, but that was soon remedied by covering it over with straw, which we found lying about. We had, however, got into a veritable hotbed of mosquitoes, for they attacked us with the greatest fury, and to sleep was impossible. The arrival of morning and dispersal of these greedy bloodsuckers was a great relief. At 6.30 A.M. the steam-horn of the Hatherly Distillery hard by sounded, bidding the workmen rise for another day of toil. At this establishment, I am told, strong waters of every variety, from Hennessey's three-star brandy to Long John of Ben Nevis fame,

can be procured. It is merely a matter of labels, and they are not so hard to copy as bank-notes. Our hiding-place proved to be admirable, for though it was uncomfortable, it was improbable that anything but a dog would find it, and we were well sheltered from the sun. This was the first day for nearly three weeks that we had seen the sun, and we were not sorry to be protected from his burning rays by the thick foliage. During the day we ate a little chocolate and some meat lozenges; but as regards water we were as badly off as Tantalus, for the river, a few yards distant, could not safely be approached. Some one seemed to be fishing in it close to us—an Englishman we thought, for he whistled, one after another, many tunes that were familiar to us. His *répertoire* was somewhat antiquated, and included amongst others "Oh, what a surprise!" and "After the ball is over." Except for the occasional song of a Kaffir, the noise of cows busily cropping the grass, and the buzzing of many insects, all else was silent. The ubiquitous fly had of course marked us down, and did not spare us his objectionable attentions, and to drive

him off by smoking was not considered safe. Even here, and indeed throughout all our travels, we never raised our voices above a whisper, lest some passer-by might hear and discover us. Our determination was if possible neither to see any one nor to be seen by any one till we reached the frontier. This would free us from incriminating explanations, if any were demanded.

Time passes slowly when one has nothing to do all day but brush off flies, and we regretted that a pack of cards had not been included among our baggage, for then we might have called the "demon" to our aid. A few trains passed up and down: these and the occasional sound of the distillery horn alone served to break the monotony. At half-past four Sergeant-Major Brockie, armed with Le Mesurier's field-glasses, which he had managed to secrete when taken prisoner, was despatched to do a little scouting, in order to find out whether there was a drift over the river near where we lay hidden. After a short time he returned, bringing the satisfactory news that the ford lay between us and the station, and across it several waggons were

outspanned. There had been a heavy fall of rain during the afternoon, but we hoped insufficient to flood the river.

When darkness at length came, we sallied forth from our retreat, crossed the river, then the railway, and reached the road. By the small scale map we possessed, the railway appeared to make a considerable bend to the south-east, and as the road seemed to form the chord of the arc, it would be shorter to follow it. But Transvaal roads are not as other roads, and are as unlike their counterpart in England as a lane in Devonshire is unlike the turnpike to Bath. Looking at a map of the Transvaal, you are tempted to believe that once on the road, so clearly defined on paper, you have only to shut your eyes and go ahead. Try it, and you will find a close resemblance between yourself and the blind led by the blind. The highways in the South African Republic are innocent of metal—Macadam is a name unknown: they consist of nothing but deeply indented wheel-tracks left by the clumsy, ponderous transport of the country—the ox-waggon. As a Dutchman in wet weather leaves the

main track where it has become swampy and marks out a line for himself, the natural consequence is that in time the vicinity of a road becomes a maze of tracks, and to find your way in the dark and in an unknown district is nigh impossible.

To-night we were to experience this. Sergeant-Major Brockie, who posed as a fairly good "pathfinder," took the lead, and we pushed boldly along; for our lame comrade was a little better, and had secured a bough as a walking-stick. We noticed that the track we were following went due south, but thought that doubtless it would soon change its course. A waggon coming towards us on the road, we had to turn off and wait until it had gone by. Not long after we had crossed the railway we came upon a large white wooden gate. Passing through it, we found we were on an avenue, both sides of which were lined with firs,—a most unusual luxury for a Dutchman; for the Boers have done almost nothing for their country in the way of wood-growing, and except for a few trees round a farmstead, you may travel miles without seeing a leaf or finding shade.

A little farther on we noticed the lights of a cottage, which we took for the lodge of some larger building. Passing by as quietly as we could, we soon came to four cross-roads, but we were beginning to lose faith in our conductor, and we turned north-east. Our route now led along what appeared to be a deer-park, for in the moonlight several of these animals could be seen to fly at our approach. We must have diverged considerably, for it seemed a long time ere we again met the railway, and both my companions were footsore and tired. Before us lay a range of hills in which was a *poort*, or gap, through which the railway passed, and on the name-board of the deserted station we read Pienaars Poort. As we drew nearer to the hills we heard the noise of rushing water, and once inside the *poort* we sat down by the river to refresh. The spot looked singularly picturesque. Road, railway, river —all were crowded together into the gap, which at its narrowest point was about two hundred yards wide; and on either side the hills, tenanted by chattering baboons, rose steep and bare. The ground ascended

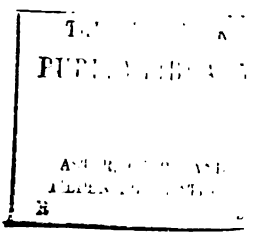




Photo by Stereoscopic Co.

Pretoria from the east.—See p. 135.

before us towards the farther entrance of this defile, and the gradient of the railway was steep. One felt instinctively that this would be a bad place in which to encounter a patrol, for the only way out of it seemed forwards or backwards.

Brand's essence and whisky worked wonders on my tired companions, and, reinvigorated, we started off full of the intention of reaching Elands River station, twenty-nine miles from Pretoria. I led the way along the railway-line. On our left, a stone's-throw distant, flowed the river, its surface shining like a mirror under the rising moon. Before me ran the double rails, looking like bars of silver; and beyond them, on the right, the road. As we trod softly and looked ahead as far as one could distinctly see, some tents appeared on the right of the railway, pitched close under the hill; one of them seemed larger than the rest. I turned to Brockie, who followed me, and asked his opinion. "Only a Kaffir kraal," he replied, so on we pressed. A few paces farther, and the stillness of the night was broken by the angry barking of a dog. Immediate action was

imperative. Down we dropped into the long rushy grass which filled the space betwixt the river and the railway. The dog continued barking—he had evidently seen us. Presently voices became audible, one of them bidding the cur be silent. But he did not cease, and another followed suit. After lying in the grass about twenty minutes, for we did not care to move so long as the dogs remained on the alert, we heard voices coming in our direction, and the barking of the dogs became more distinct. A patrol was on its way to clear up the situation. A whispered conference was held, when it was decided to retreat, and then we dragged ourselves like snakes diagonally back towards the river. Fortunately the rushes had been beaten down by a recent flood, and our tracks were barely visible. Reaching a broad ditch full of water, Le Mesurier, who was following me, came alongside and asked me if I had seen Brockie, who had been following him. Being in front I had not, so we waited a few moments; but seeing nothing of him, and the enemy drawing near, we crossed the obstacle and found ourselves at

the edge of the stream. Again we paused, this time for several minutes, and the searchers came in view, following our track. One of them, who was walking along almost bent double, we thought was Brockie, but looking through the rushes we quickly found our mistake.

At this moment many things rushed through my mind, and more especially one. Shortly before leaving Pretoria I had been reading again a very ancient friend, 'Tales of a Grandfather,' and now I instinctively remembered how the Bruce, when hunted by John of Lorne's bloodhound, had waded down a river and so destroyed the scent. My mind was quickly made up.

The crisis had come: to stay where we were meant probably recapture. I whispered to Le Mesurier to follow me silently and not to splash. Transferring my manuscript map from my pocket to the lining of my hat, the next minute I was in the river, which was out of my depth, and Le Mesurier dropped in beside me. Holding on to the roots of the reeds which lined the bank, we paused and watched the searchers, then care-

fully pulled ourselves some distance down-stream, and paused again. The Boers and their dogs were evidently now at fault, and showed no signs of coming our way, so we continued our downward course, and ultimately swam across and into a ditch on the other side.

We had been a good half-hour in the stream, which seemed to us intensely cold, and our teeth were chattering so that we could scarcely speak. My wrist-watch had stopped; but Le Mesurier's—a Waterbury—was still going, for it had been provided by his care with a waterproof case. We now crept along the ditch up-stream again, and then turned off towards the hillside, which was dotted with large boulders. Coming round the corner of one of these, we found a tent in front of us, in which a light was burning, and not caring to pass it, we tried to climb up the steep face of the hill. Failing at one point, we found a kind of "chimney," up which we climbed, pulling and pushing each other till the top was gained. A few minutes' rest was necessary, for our clothes were heavy with water and the climb



"*Holding on to the reeds, we watch the searchers.*"—See p. 149.

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had made us breathless. Le Mesurier had done wonders with his ankle—the cold water had been most efficacious. Next we walked along the rocky face of the hill, parallel to the direction we had followed below, and gradually descended to the level and struck a path. While on the hillside we had looked down into the valley below, where all seemed quiet and nothing moved. Brockie was irretrievably lost, and it was useless to attempt to find him. He had with him a water-bottle and sufficient food, and knew both the Dutch and the Kaffir language. Following the path, we passed several clumps of bracken, one of which we selected as a suitable hiding-place. To have walked farther in our wet and clinging garments might have been wiser, but we decided that we had had sufficient excitement for one night without trying to add to it.

Carefully avoiding breaking down the fern, we took our way into the centre of the clump, and made ourselves as comfortable as was possible. I took as a prophylactic ten grains of quinine and four of opium, all that was not reduced to pulp by our recent immersion. The dose

of opium, I have since been told, was a large if not indeed a lethal one, but it did not make me sleep. The night was bitterly cold—for where we lay was nearly five thousand feet above the sea-level—and, soaked as we were, we shook and shivered. Of course the mosquitoes did not spare us, and we spent the remainder of the night in fighting this useless scourge.

When day broke I found I was so stiff and rheumatic that I could not move, and Le Mesurier was not much better. However, when the sun rose and penetrated our wooden bodies we soon found movement possible, and by noon we were dry and ready for any more adventures that might come. We had suffered some loss by that unavoidable dip in the river. Le Mesurier had lost a pocket-book[1] and I the contents of the

[1] Rather more than a year after Le Mesurier lost his pocket-book, it was found at the spot where he dropped it by a corporal of an infantry regiment stationed at Pienaars Poort. This man, ascertaining from the contents to whom it belonged, sent it to the owner, and except that the cover had been eaten by insects it was in wonderful preservation.

whisky-bottle, the cork of which had come out when we were crawling along in the grass — by accident, not design. I had also lost a triangular file, a memento of the Model School. Further, our food-supply was water-logged, our tobacco spoilt, and likewise our matches. We managed to eat some pulpy chocolate, which was becoming nauseous to us, besides creating a thirst we had no means of quenching. We had trusted to finding plenty of mealies growing; but the harvest was just gathered in, and this source of supply was lacking.

Our hiding-place, although overlooked by the hills, was a good one. Only a few Dutchmen and Kaffirs passed by along the paths, and they saw no sign of us. The want of proximity to water was its greatest fault, and we mutually agreed that howsoever uncomfortable a swamp might be as a sleeping-place, it was the only place in which to pass a day under the broiling sun, unless a shady nook were forthcoming. Few trains passed, as it was Sunday. One could not help carrying

one's thoughts back to Pretoria, and wondering where our accomplices would think we had reached, and what they would think we were doing. Only too well we knew, at any hour of the day, how they were passing their time, and how unhappy many of them were. How light-hearted we felt at being free again! All that was necessary for us now was care and caution, and these we had been accustomed to when below the floor, and we were now determined not to leave anything to chance, or what people term luck, or to spare any trouble which might help to ensure our ultimate freedom.

In addition to the ordinary risks of being captured or shot—for being in plain clothes we ran the risk of treatment as spies—there were two others which now presented themselves. My fear was lest the trap-door, which we could not shut down very neatly, might have been noticed; and also that Sergeant-Major Brockie should get ahead of us, reach Lorenço Marques, and, forgetting that we were still behind him, talk. That the latter

supposition was not devoid of foundation will appear later. On the whole, however, I felt exceedingly confident that our enterprise would prove successful: if we should have the misfortune to be recaptured, at least we would feel satisfied for ever after that we had made a determined bid for freedom.

The hour had now come round when it was time to continue our journey. It was decided to leave the railway and use the moon as a guide till near dawn, when by turning north we could regain the railway with certainty and reach Elands River station. The distant roll of thunder and the lightning-flashes gave every sign of a coming storm. The moon was not yet up; but the flashes which from time to time shot forth from the inky clouds made the bare veldt look as bright as day, and we felt that we were very conspicuous. Dropping down into the valley, we crossed at a narrow spot the same river whose waters we had encountered the night before. Soon we came to the railway, which we had decided not to follow, crossed it, and proceeded up a

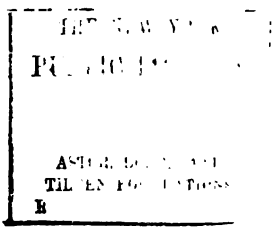
long steep hill. After we had covered between two or three miles, to my dismay I discovered that I had left my money-belt, containing some £18, and a compass, at our last hiding-place. The risk of returning to look for them was too great, for on quitting our hiding-place we had noticed many lights in the neighbourhood, and the probability of finding the clump of ferns in the pitchy darkness was remote. Besides which, both Le Mesurier and I were even now not entirely devoid of money, and it was doubtful if we should require what we still had. We therefore pushed on till by the light of the moon we saw in front of us a Kaffir kraal, and found that we were walking past a field of water-melons. The opportunity was too good to be lost. Since we left our hiding-place we had had no water save that which a shower had left in the hoof-marks of some cattle. We now sat down and simply gorged this thirst-quenching pulp. I have often eaten Afghan melons, which the caravans bring on their camels to Peshawur, and these more resembled them than any others that I have tasted. But we had

been heard or scented, for the kraal dogs near by began to bark. I hastily tied up a melon in my handkerchief, and we walked silently away. Treading our way softly through some mealie-fields, we came to a deep donga at the bottom of which was a muddy rushing stream. We followed this for some time, till, thinking that our destination must be near, we crossed over and mounted a hill. Half-way up its side we heard a sound of galloping. The place was very open and the grass burnt short, but after a few moments of suspense nothing worse than a frightened horse appeared.

It seemed as if we were never going to strike the railway; but in this particular locality, where the ground is hilly and the gradients steep, I believe its windings are extraordinary. As with all the railways in South Africa, the contour of the ground was followed, cuttings and embankments being rare. Suddenly the glint of the moonlight reflected from the rails caught our eyes, then the black telegraph poles like spectres, and the wires, through which the chilly breeze was softly moaning. We had reached it at last.

But our last two nights' experiences with railway guards had had their effect, and we foolishly left the line and wandered far from our course. After some miles we saw in front of us a small wood, close to which some waggons were outspanned, and soon after passing them I had what cannot have been anything but a hallucination. Brockie was in my thoughts, and I was wondering where he was and if by any chance we should meet him to-night at Elands River, for we had talked with him of making for that place. On the ground a little to my left I saw what seemed to be a man lying at full length, his elbows resting on the ground, his head between his hands. Telling Le Mesurier what I saw, we went nearer, but the vision of my fancy had gone; yet it was so clear that I can recall it and the spot where it occurred with the utmost distinctness.

Not far from here we came to a ridge of grey rocks, where we sat down. I was tired out, principally from having slept badly when below ground, and from not having slept at all since we left Pretoria, and was





"*It was a young Dutchman.*"—See p. 160.

prepared to lie down on the veldt and take my chance of discovery. But dawn was near, and before us we saw a signal-post and a little farther off a wayside station. Crossing the railway, we made for a clump of trees which rose prominently before us on the sky-line. No river was to be seen, although the name of the place betokened one: there was nothing in a liquid form visible save a tiny trickling stream. This, however, is a little way of their own that South African rivers have—at one time a roaring torrent, at another a microscopic stream.

Hard by a cock was shrilly crowing, betokening the presence of some inhabited dwelling, but, tired as I was, that was of no concern to me.

Nearing the trees, we walked into a barbed-wire fence, and crossing it, selected a small clump of blue-gum or eucalyptus trees for our lair. These were only saplings, six to eight feet high, interspersed with larger trees of a kind unknown to me. Behind us we had left two alarming tracks in the dew-sodden grass — but the sun would soon

rectify that. Throwing ourselves down, we endeavoured to get some sleep before the mosquitoes found us and made repose impossible. We were far from comfortable, for the place was strewn with roots and stones; but my melon made such an excellent pillow that I was soon in the land of Nod, and awoke startled at 7 to hear Le Mesurier whispering, "I think we are discovered!" I could get no more from him just then, so lay thinking what was to be done, and hoping that he was mistaken.

He told me afterwards that some one had passed close by, and, he thought, had seen us. A heavy shower of rain now fell, perhaps hiding our footprints in the grass. Two hours later the sound of advancing footsteps became audible. It was a young Dutchman coming along a path not six feet from where our heads lay on the ground. He stopped when he came opposite to us, and a dog which accompanied him growled. How this animal did not immediately discover us will always remain a mystery to me, but perhaps the same shower which hid our tracks also

spoilt the scent. Visions of bloodthirsty *vrouws* arose in one's mind; for now there were few men on their farms, and it was said on all hands that the women were more than Spartan in their severity. The lad now began shouting loudly what I supposed to be some Kaffir name, and after a brief interval was joined by some one with whom he talked for a space. It seemed to us as if he must have seen us, and, not daring himself to disturb the intruders, had called for help. But it is marvellous how, if one remains absolutely still, one may pass unnoticed, and our imaginations here had led us astray. Nothing happened, they moved away, and the incident only increased our confidence; for we felt that having had two such close shaves, we must eventually escape altogether.

All day long the Kaffirs worked near us, busy cutting wood and drawing water, and the Dutch lad passed more than once again. The Kaffir is more like an animal than a human being in the way he will detect a spoor and traces that would not catch a white man's notice; but we were

completely unnoticed that day by black or white.

Of course, by now we knew that we had walked right into the middle of a Boer farm; but I had been too tired the night before to care where I went. The difficulty now was to leave it so quietly at night that even the dogs might not hear us. At 7 o'clock we quitted the gum-tree thicket and made our way through mealie-fields and hedges till we were quite clear of our dangerous surroundings. This took a long time, for each sun-dried mealie-stalk in our path had to be held aside, lest the rustling noise which they would have made if we had attempted to pass quickly through should rouse the watch-dogs. I eagerly scanned each plant as we made our way between them, but not one single corn-spike remained.

It might almost seem as if we had departed from our original plan of trying to catch a night train; but on the three preceding evenings we had wandered far from the railway, and had thought that during our absence from its vicinity the east-



Emergency Ration.—See p. 167.

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ward-going train might well have passed. To-night, however, though some doubts had certainly arisen in our minds as to whether the train ran or not, it was our intention to lie in wait for it and board an empty truck as it moved slowly up a gradient. Should we be successful, it would bring us to near Balmoral by daybreak. But we were destined to pass that night and the two next on the veldt. We now made direct for the railway, which was near, and shortly after found a gradient of 1 in 57 for some hundred metres. Lying down close to it, and shielding our faces from the mosquitoes with our coats, we remained till 2 A.M., but no train passed. It now seemed certain that the night-service no longer ran, and there was nothing left but to go on walking. Our experiences of the previous evening decided us as to our route, and for a couple of hours we followed the line, and then began to look for water and a place to hide in. As there was a ganger's house close to the railway-line, it seemed probable that we should find water of some sort near. In this we proved to be right,

for we nearly walked into a circular pit, at the bottom of which were some inches of the precious liquid. Quenching our thirst and filling the bottle, we looked everywhere for some place that would hide us. There was nothing for it but to lie down by an ant-bear hole upon which we fortunately stumbled. The dwelling of this animal is a hole like a badger's, with a trench about two feet deep, and as broad, leading to the entrance. Here we lay down and prepared, when the sun rose, to be grilled for nine or ten hours, for there was no shade, and we had no means of making it without attracting notice; and our ten-ounce water-bottle would not go very far. In two more marches we should reach Balmoral, and once there, we had a very good hope of hiding ourselves in a coal-truck bound for Portuguese territory.

VI.

FROM VELDT TO COAL-MINE.

"We must take the current when it serves, or lose our venture."

We had prepared ourselves for a warm day, but this one far exceeded our anticipations: however, so long as we remained well hidden and knew that at nightfall we should be cool and able to procure water, we had no great cause for complaint. The main road and the telegraph-wire were only a few yards distant, but very few Kaffirs passed our way and not a Dutchman, for except the house which stood close to the railway, no other human habitation was near. As usual, we had got soaked to the waist in going through the long grass; but the hot sun soon remedied such a trifle, and before the day came to an end we would have given something to have been in a condition similar to that

in which we had first invaded the ant-bear hole.

I have often since thought that in our wanderings on the veldt we were fortunate to escape a grass fire, an everyday occurrence in these regions. Had it happened that one had come our way,—and the tell-tale smoke we sometimes saw afar off showed how possible that was,—nothing would have remained but to seek safety in flight, a course which would inevitably have led to discovery.

We calculated by the kilometres marked on the white boards at various points along the line that we had only covered thirty-six miles in four days—a poor record—and had still twenty-one to compass before we should reach the neighbourhood of the collieries at Balmoral. Short commons, lack of sleep, and want of water were beginning to have their effect upon us, and we thought we had done well when we had walked ten miles. It was scarcely dark when, our thirst having got beyond endurance, we hurried to the pool which we had enjoyed the night before.

Except an army emergency ration, which Le Mesurier had carefully preserved ever

since he was captured at Dundee, and a scrap of biltong, we had nothing left to eat. Seating ourselves by this pool we broke into our last reserve, and seldom have I enjoyed a meal (if such it can be called) so much. This ration is intended to last the soldier for thirty-six hours, and it is divided into two parts, each in a small tin which is enclosed in a larger one. One tin contains what I cannot clearly describe, but it is a species of powder, or pemmican, greyish in colour, caked hard, and tasting slightly of "Bombay duck." The other tin is full of cocoa in a highly concentrated form, with a pleasant acid taste. They are both to be cooked or not, as circumstances will allow. Cooking-pots were not included in our kit, and means to light a fire, had we desired to do so, did not exist. We therefore dined off our delicacy in its raw state, but only ate about one-third of it, for it had to last two hungry men for seventy-two hours, not one soldier for thirty-six. Our supper at an end, we proceeded on our way, and avoiding the ganger's house, from which the sound of laughter could be heard, gained

the railway. From constant listening and peering through the darkness, eyes and ears had grown far more sensitive, and the least sound of voices, or dogs barking, or the faint glimmer of a light in a bridge-guard's tent, did not escape our senses. I cannot but think that the use of dogs in war by us British, a dog-loving nation, has been unaccountably overlooked. I believe certain nations — the Germans and French — use them; but we, who have our kennel-clubs, and every encouragement to breed the best and purest of the canine species, do not include these faithful friends among our war-material. In India, where one suffers so much from rifle-thieves, without his dog there would be many a court-martial on the owner of a stolen rifle. There the dogs are chained to the arm-racks, sentries with whose vigilance no human being can compete. Often in Tirah the wily Afridi would bring his dog with him when bent on disturbing our rest by firing into camp. He knew right well that if the plucky little Ghoorka was engaged in stalking him, his four-footed friend would give him timely warning.

Le Mesurier and I know what a curse were the dogs within whose hearing we came on our way to Lorenço Marques; and I think that if we employed them on outpost duty, and trained them to growl softly when some stranger was approaching, the possibility of surprise would be greatly lessened, and the soldier on his lonely post, where he has to depend on the acuteness of his sight and hearing, would feel the value of this assistant.

The night was wet and windy, which made both hearing and seeing doubly difficult. Keeping along the railway, we passed through a long but shallow cutting, and after going for a few miles saw in front of us a tent in which was a light, and heard the low murmur of voices. As usual, we left the line and made a detour, which brought us to the well-known Bronkhurst Spruit—a fact we ascertained by stealthily creeping along the station platform and reading the name-board. I may be pardoned for recalling to my readers the episode which befell the 94th Regiment under Colonel Anstruther near here, on the

20th December 1880. It was the opening scene of the war of 1881, which terminated with Amajuba. A detachment of that corps was marching to Pretoria, before any declaration of hostilities had been made, when they were ambushed by the Boers, and out of 250 persons all but one officer and 120 men fell within a few minutes. The Boers boast of this brutal massacre as a victory; and in spite of this, and their abuse of the white flag and use of expanding bullets during the present campaign, there are men who call themselves Englishmen who are ready to extend to them the hand of friendship and of sympathy.

Hurrying past this place of mournful memory, we soon came to the village of the same name. The dogs here seemed strangely restless, and as the moon was shining brightly and the rain had ceased, another wide detour on hands and knees was essential. Then we came to a river, and crossing it we regained the railway. A few miles farther on, with no incident worth recording—except that Le Mesurier had the misfortune to tumble full-length

into a marsh,—we began to think it was time to make our nightly search for a hiding-place. I had been told by a colonial that the grass when at its longest would hide a man from view, and had expected when we left Pretoria to experience no difficulty with regard to hiding-places. But like many tales from South Africa, this one proved untrue. After a good deal of hunting up and down, backwards and forwards, we agreed to lie down in a swamp where the grass and reeds were fairly tall, and near which no human habitation could be seen. It was very wet, probably full of fever-germs; but no matter, we should have the wherewithal at hand with which to fight the sun when he rose.

Next day passed peacefully; we were evidently "far from the madding crowd," for all day long we did not see a soul except some Kaffirs, who were working on the railway-line some way off. By the side of a tiny stream we sat, paddling our feet in its cooling waters, talking over the adventures we had met, anticipating those which were to come, and longing fervently for any-

thing, no matter what, of an edible nature—for the pangs of hunger absolutely declined to be postponed by copious libations of water. Refreshed by a few hours' sleep, we made our way to the railway as twilight turned to night, and, avoiding one or two bridge-guards, reached some running water. The night was very dark, so much so that two Dutchmen passed close by us while we lay down, and crossing rivers by faith and not by sight is not pleasant work.

The river we had reached is called the Wilge river, and being at that season in flood, was broken into several branches. After negotiating four, we thought no more remained; but a girder railway-bridge was dimly visible on our right, a gentle hint that all were not yet passed. The Boer who guarded this bridge must have heard us, for he came out of his tent with a lantern, and, while we lay hidden in the wet grass, listened for some time. Of course at the very moment he appeared the moon began to rise over the crest of a hill in front of us; but as the lantern soon disappeared, we got up and continued our travels.

A few paces brought us to the edge of a most uninviting-looking river—one of those sluggish, stagnant streams such as one meets in Belgium. Neither of us was in the mood for a swim—it was too early in the evening for that; and on trying its depth I found it reached to my waist, and its bottom was composed of soft mud. Along the bank we walked, and were soon rewarded by hearing the sound of running water, and a little farther brought us to a shallow ford: overlooking it on the opposite bank was a cottage, which seemed to be deserted. We crossed over, and found ourselves on a hillside covered with loose stones—an ideal spot for spraining an ankle, and a place which caused my lame companion some distress. The moon came to our rescue, and we again struck the railway without mishap. We now thought that Balmoral could not be far off, and the hope of reaching there before dawn made us push along quickly—so quickly that we failed to bear in mind the maxim, *festina lente*. In consequence we nearly walked into a tent, and had to hide beside the railway till, after reconnoitring, I ascertained that we

had not been seen. Before us on either side of the railway, and close to it, were farms, easily recognisable by the clumps of trees around the buildings. To follow the railway, which bent sharply to the left, was inadvisable, so we turned aside and made a flank march round the outskirts of a farm. In front was a line of hills which seemed to block the way, but on approaching we found a rocky gap down which a stream of water ran. Following this to its source, we traversed a tract of marshy ground, and after another mile or two rejoined the railway.

Suddenly we were aware of an odour familiar to us both, the smell of burning coal. We had not expected to find a colliery so close, nor was there one, for the wind brought from a distance what our nasal organs had at once detected. However, we very soon came upon a siding full of coal-trucks. I now made a systematic examination of every truck, to see by the ticket on it where its contents were bound for. It is not the custom to put the full name of a place on these labels, and had I seen L.M., I should have known that it meant Lorenço

Marques. But nearly all these trucks were labelled N.C. or J.K. There was no mistaking the first two letters,—they must stand for Newcastle in Natal; but as for J.K.,[1] it was Greek to us. Standing at one end of the siding was an engine, and close by the trucks a small Kaffir hut, outside which were some embers where the occupants had cooked their evening meal.

We were tempted to try to clear up the situation, and find out if any trucks were bound for our destination; but it was 2 A.M., the Kaffirs were probably asleep, so we returned to the swampy spot which we had passed before. On our way back I found a large-sized mushroom, one-half of which I ate forthwith, while the other served for breakfast next morning. Cutting down some rushes, we spread them in the swamp, and lay down to snatch a few hours' sleep, which the mosquitoes were determined we should not have. The night, as usual, was very cold, and as I had had rheumatism in my knees ever since the night we took to the river, I was right glad when the sun

[1] Johannesburg.

rose. The day was very warm; but there was more than enough of water, and our hopes were high, for we were determined to secure a truck at one or other of the colliery sidings, and get the rest of our journey over. All day long the noise of the shunting at the siding, where we had been so early in the morning, could be heard, and more than one train seemed to leave it. We hoped that there might be some trucks for Delagoa Bay, where many ships must surely stop to coal.

Towards evening a middle-aged Boer, accompanied by a boy and armed with a sporting rifle, passed us not far off. As luck would have it, a bird, not unlike a curlew, rose from the swamp close to us and flew behind him; but he neither heard nor saw it, and soon they disappeared from view.

The weather, which all day had been very sultry, now began to look most threatening. From every quarter black clouds seemed to roll towards that part of the sky which overhung our swamp. There was no mistaking these signs—we were in for a very heavy storm. Half-past five passed and still it did not come, but by six the rain had begun to

fall, and a few minutes later we left the swamp drenched to the skin. Amid flashes of lightning which caused the veldt to look bright as day, and the thunder's sullen roar, we made our way to the Kaffir hut at the siding.

Before leaving our hiding-place we had finished every scrap of food we possessed, yet I have no recollection of feeling anxious as to the future. Not even an inch of biltong remained. This succulent and sustaining stuff is always carried by the Boers when travelling or campaigning. It is made from the flesh of the buck or ox, cut from the choicest parts. Strips of this meat are steeped in vinegar and pepper for two hours, then covered with salt, which it sucks in all night. Next day the strips are hung up in a shady place until their exterior is dry, when they are put in the sun, which soon makes them as hard as wood. This is now fit for eating, and as much as is required for a meal can be cut from it as one slices a cucumber.

Miserable objects, indeed, were we when we came opposite the coal-siding. Not a stitch of dry clothing on us, starving and

weak; but shelter and perhaps food were to be found inside the hut, and Le Mesurier had impressed on me from previous experience that Kaffirs were absolutely to be trusted. He had some years before served in Zululand, and had the utmost confidence that no Kaffir we met would betray us, more especially so now that we were at some distance from Pretoria.

The door was open and a light burned within. We entered, and saluting the occupants with the Kaffir greeting, "*Sacabona?*" (How do you do?) sat down. There were five thick-lipped, ebony-coloured negroes seated round a caldron, which, turned on its side, displayed its half-eaten contents—thick dry mealie-meal porridge. Without another word we joined the circle, those nearest us drawing aside their mats, for the rain-water was running off us on to the hard mud floor. Indicating our desire to share their meal, the vessel was tilted towards us, and stretching out a hand we drew forth a lump of the coagulated mess. We were both so hungry that the desire for food left us when it was within our grasp; but after a short time the

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"*Without another word we joined the circle.*"—See p. 178.

craving returned, and we did justice to the simple fare, realising keenly what it was to eat to live.

The Kaffirs exhibited no vestige of a sign of surprise at our sudden inroad, behaving in the same phlegmatic, dignified manner that one meets with in the East. They must have wondered too who we were, for had we been Dutchmen we should have known their language.

Meantime we had tried the few Kaffir words and sentences we knew upon our black friends, one of whom took pride in repeating his very few words of English. The conversation was not long sustained, and having satisfied our hunger we left the hut. It was pouring still, and the prospect of finding other coal-sidings and examining trucks without the aid of a light—for, as I have said before, we had no matches—was not a pleasing one. We therefore entered the hut again, having decided that we would disclose who we were and try to enlist the help of its occupants. It was easily explained that we were Englishmen from Pretoria running away from the Boers and making for Delagoa Bay.

We at once had the sympathy of all, who showed their hatred of the Dutch by signs and gestures, drawing their fingers across their throats, clenching and shaking their fists. So thoroughly did they grasp the situation that the conversation was now conducted in whispers, for outside, not far off, was an engine the driver of which was a Hollander. It was now necessary to try and explain what we wanted them to do. I happened on the previous evening, for no particular reason, to have taken the label off a truck and put it in my pocket; producing it, no word of explanation was required. Two of the Kaffirs left the hut and did not return for some minutes, but when they did they brought with them several other labels. Looking at them, we found that none of them bore the mystic letters L.M. Again they went out. We now gave five sovereigns to the elderly Kaffir who seemed to be the *doyen* of them all, and made him understand that they were his if he could get us a truck for Delagoa Bay. It may be remembered that before we left Pretoria, Sergeant-Major Brockie had given me some slight instruction in the Kaffir

tongue, and having some suitable sentences written down, I read them out, much to the curiosity of the listeners, who wanted to see the paper on which they were inscribed. After several more visits had been paid to the coal-trucks, it seemed certain that none was bound for the coast. The old Kaffir then handed back the gold, and giving him a trifle in return for the food, we again left the hut.

Outside everything looked so black and unpromising that we agreed to put our fate entirely in the hands of the five Kaffirs. For the third and last time we entered the hut and asked them point-blank who their *baas* was. Was he an Englishman or a Dutchman? The reply came from all that he was the former and lived not far away, and we thereupon decided to go and ask his help. It might be that we should find that he was a man on parole to take no part in the war, and to remain neutral; but it could do no harm to see him and obtain some food and information. We therefore indicated that we wanted one of them to conduct us to his house;

whereupon the youngest Kaffir rose, put on an ancient overcoat, and we went forth again into the night. The rain had ceased, and, following our guide, we crossed the siding, feeling that our difficulties were coming to an end.

In the distance a burning slack-heap of a coal-mine could be seen against the sable background of the sky. It looked nearer than it was, for almost an hour passed before we got into close proximity to it; but the walk seemed to dry our clothes, and we stumbled along in the dark, anxious to know what was in store for us. Passing some sheds, we came to the pit's mouth, and then climbing over some rubbish-heaps, found ourselves facing a row of one-storeyed dwellings. Our cicerone indicated that he had performed his part of the undertaking, and that the manager's habitation lay before us. Knocking on his door, a voice bade us enter. We did so, and found ourselves in the presence of a tall fair man, who later told us that he thought we were Boers. I asked him if he were an Englishman. He replied that he was, but from his accent and



Douglas Mine and Jansen's House.—See p. 182.

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appearance he looked more like a Swede. Eventually he informed us that he was a native of Denmark, whereupon I told him my name was of Danish origin. I then inquired if he were on parole, as we wanted his help. As he replied in the negative, I added that we wanted to travel to Delagoa Bay concealed in a coal-truck, and asked how far he could help us. He remained lost in thought for several minutes, and then said that it would be difficult; that his mine was sending no coal to the sea-coast, but that three trucks were to be loaded for Lorenço Marques at a small mine close by on the following morning, and that he would try to have the loading postponed till night, so that we could reach our hiding-place unseen. This meant taking another man into our confidence, but as he was a Scotsman there was no objection. He said that he would arrange the matter at once, but the question was where to put us for the night. On my suggesting the coal-mine, he said that there were several Hollanders on duty there, none of whom could be trusted to keep their counsel.

Le Mesurier and I then said that the veldt was good enough for us, and that if he could get us some food, we would lie out all night and come to some appointed place next evening. He answered he would bring the storekeeper to us, and, leaving the room, shortly returned with that, to us, most welcome individual.

Mr Moore, the manager of the Douglas Colliery store, now took complete charge of us. He led us to his house, which stood in a garden quite apart from any others, and soon we were seated at his hospitable table eating as if our lives depended on it. Our first civilised meal for over three weeks consisted of tinned salmon, cocoa, and the usual adjuncts. I think we horrified our host by our indecent rapacity, but it gave him a good idea of what we should require on the morrow. Mr Moore told us that he was the son of a late Indian general who had served in the 13th Madras Native Infantry, and that his brother, in the Imperial Light Horse, had fought at Elandslaagte side by side with my regiment.

It was a great relief no longer to talk in whispers, and our voices sounded strange to us. Our host occupied himself in considering where to lodge us for the night, and decided to put us in a forage-shed next the store, which was generally occupied by his Kaffir boys, who need not know who we were. The moon was up, and we made our way to the shed. In the next house was an Irishman who was in sympathy with the Boers and had some grievance against Moore, so we were cautioned to keep very quiet. With apologies for putting us in such a place —a palace to what we had been accustomed to of late—Moore left us for the night.

A deep sense of contentment and satisfaction now came over us, partly engendered by the feeling of repletion, and of being able to look forward to a much-wanted night's rest without mosquitoes. A slight arrangement of the forage bundles was necessary, and this made, we were soon fast asleep, despite numbers of mice whose dwellings we had invaded. At a quarter-

past six next morning we were startled by hearing some one knocking at the small window, which was partly covered by a sack to hide our presence within. Whoever it was next came round to the door, which was bolted inside. Cautiously opening it a few inches, a black face peered in at me, and the owner thereof having apparently satisfied his curiosity gave a loud guffaw and went off. Shortly after this a man's face, of somewhat forbidding aspect, appeared at the window and shouted something in Dutch. Receiving no answer, he tried us in English, saying, "Hulloo! who told you to doss down there?" Le Mesurier said by mistake, "Mr Jansen," which was the name of the Dane who had passed us on to Moore. This seemed to excite the inquirer's ire, probably because this store was Moore's, and saying, "Damn his cheek!" he went off. It left with us a most uncomfortable feeling that, even if he were friendly, of which I felt some doubts, not knowing who the strangers were, he might reveal what he had seen to some one better kept

in ignorance. Our fears were dispelled when at 9 o'clock Moore appeared, bringing with him our recent visitor, who turned out to be the butcher of the mine, and lived next door. He told us that his name was Smith, and that he was a Natal-born Englishman, and had been compelled by the Boers, being a burgher, to fight at Elandslaagte and Spion Kop; but that he had made a rapid strategical move to the rear at the former fight and escaped the lancers. He said he had avoided pointing his rifle so as to inflict damage on his fellow-countrymen.

A door which led from the store into the forage-shed was now opened, and throughout this day a liberal supply of meat and drink was passed in to us. At 10 o'clock we were told that the medical man who had charge of the miners, and happened to be making one of his occasional visits, was coming in to see us. Dr Gillespie, one of those fortunate beings whose voice and manner at once inspire confidence, now entered the shed. He told us that, purely on chance of hearing some news at the mine, he had driven over from Brug

Spruit on the previous day, and stopping the night had chanced to hear in the morning that the escaped prisoners, of whom every one knew, had at length arrived.

The extraordinary chain of circumstances which had brought us to the mine, exactly at the right time, was now made evident to us. Had not Le Mesurier delayed us owing to his sprained ankle, had not the thunderstorm driven us to the Kaffirs' hut, we should probably never have heard of Dr Gillespie. It was not his usual day for visiting the mine. He now told us his plans for getting us safely over the border. To my amazement he said that he and some others had managed it for Churchill, and they would do the same for us. He told us to say nothing to any one of the fact that they had helped Churchill, and that when it grew dark he would drive us to another mine, where plans for the future would be matured. He added that we might now consider ourselves out of the country, our further movements would be so devoid of risk. Bidding us farewell till evening, and saying that the coal-truck plan was now at an end, he left us.

Another visitor followed, Mr Haughton, manager of the adjacent mine, which was sending the three trucks of coal to Delagoa Bay. He was an old soldier, and had served in the Zulu war, and was quite disappointed when he heard that our plans were altered and that we were not to travel in one of his trucks. He told us that Dr Gillespie had an excellent plan for getting us out of the country, and we could entirely rely upon him.

It was here that I happened to read in a paper, to my great surprise and distress, of the death of Sir William Lockhart, Commander-in-Chief in India, on whose staff I had been for three years and a half, and who had allowed me to rejoin my regiment in order to come to South Africa. It had been my very good fortune to have twice served on his staff in the field, and to have realised that magnetic influence which makes some few commanders born leaders of men, and this power he possessed in the highest degree.

During the day a gramophone played numerous topical airs for our amusement,

and when it grew dark Moore came and took us again to his house. Here we found, thanks to his thoughtful kindness, a complete change of garments, for our own were fit for nothing but the dust-heap. We also enjoyed the luxury of a bath, and were much amused at the reflection of ourselves in a looking-glass.

After we had had supper, a number of Englishmen employed on the mine came and, out of curiosity and interest in our escape, asked to see us. I felt glad that we were not remaining at this mine, for far too many knew our secret; and though each individual would keep it inviolate, still an indiscreet remark might lead to our discovery.

Dr Gillespie left before us to see his horses inspanned, and shortly afterwards, conducted by Moore, we bade adieu to the occupants of the house, and striking across the veldt went to the appointed place where we were to join the doctor. It had been considered unsafe to meet him at the mine.

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Douglas Mine (*Kaffirs in coal trollies*).– See p. 191.

VII.

AT THE COAL-MINE.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

FOLLOWING our conductor down the lower slopes of the hill, on the summit of which, strange to say, the coal-mine was situated, the lights from the burning slack-heaps grew less distinct. On reaching the level no signs of the doctor were visible. Matches were lighted, but no responsive flash answered ours. At length Moore returned along the way we had come, and having met his assistant a short distance off, came and told us that the doctor had decided to take another route, one which was better than that he had at first intended to follow.

Retracing our footsteps, we came upon him near the mine. He was seated in a two-wheeled dog-cart, to which a pair of

grey horses were harnessed. Climbing up beside him, we took our places on the front seat, and the hood of the trap was raised. We bade farewell to Moore, and, taking with us his earnest good wishes for our freedom, started.

I regret to say that, many months later, when Botha and his men were retiring eastward from Pretoria after Lord Roberts' entry into the capital, some of his force happened to camp at the Douglas mine. As I have mentioned before, the secret of our having been hidden there was known to many, and came to the knowledge of the commando which was passing through. Whereupon some of them without hesitation maliciously destroyed Moore's house and property, and he probably only escaped with his life by happening to be in Johannesburg at the time.

The night was intensely dark, and until the moon rose—for we were driving without lamps—we could barely see a horse's length before us. I have mentioned the difficulty we had on leaving Eerste Fabriken of finding our way by road when walking; now

we were to experience a similar difficulty while driving. The doctor knew the road well, but the numerous tracks, of which in parts it consisted, made it difficult to follow the right one; and so dark was the night that we were obliged to keep at a foot's pace almost the whole way.

Many times during that drive of fourteen miles we were on the eve of upsetting; but fortune favoured us, and though we rolled from side to side at the bad places, like a ship broadside on in a heavy swell, we never quite went over. Part of the journey took us close to the railway; and I have heard since that we drove past several Boer dwellings, and in two instances close to their doors. There was a possibility of some inquisitive Dutchman stopping to speak to the doctor, and becoming suspicious when he saw three persons in the cart, for the usual number it carried was two—himself and his servant; but we saw no one, and only at one place where we crossed the railway had I to squeeze down behind the splash-board.

The doctor told us he was taking us

to the Transvaal Delagoa Bay Company's colliery. Reaching it, he would hand us over to Mr Howard, who had arranged for Churchill's escape, and he himself would go home to Brug Spruit, four miles off. Even if any of the Hollanders should chance to hear that we had been at the Douglas Colliery for one night, they would have no idea where we had gone afterwards, and, the ground being very dry and hard, the cart would leave but an indifferent spoor.

It was half-past one in the morning of Saturday, 24th March, when we drew up near the office of the colliery where we were to be the hospitable manager's guests for several days. All was silent and deserted, except for the presence of the two Kaffir boys on guard outside the office. Dr Gillespie got down a short way from the office, going on in advance to see if the coast was clear, and after a few minutes returned and conducted us into a room behind it. Here the occupant of the room and I mutually recognised one another. It was no other than the Englishman whom, as I related before, I had seen, with another,

walk past the Staats Model School. That other very soon joined us, and was introduced to us as Mr Burnham, the manager of the mine store. The first, whose name was Addams, was resident secretary of the mine. They now told me that they had passed the school, wondering how they could communicate with us to help some of us to escape. Addams left the room in search of the manager, who lived a short distance from the office. When he knocked at the door of Mr Howard's room a voice said, "Anything wrong?" The reply, "Pumps broken down," was given. Mr Howard afterwards told us that he instinctively said to himself, "They've come at last." He had made up his mind that we should somehow reach his coal-mine, and had kept Kaffirs out night after night near the railway watching for us. He also had for nights past played "God save the Queen" on his piano, with the windows open, lest we passing that way should hear and crave admittance.

Soon the objects of so much solicitude saw before them a tall, spare, clean-shaven man

—evidently a man of strong purpose and resolution. The resemblance of the manager to Von Moltke struck me at once. His arrival was the signal for a decision to be come to regarding our disposal. It appeared that Churchill, or Dr Bentock (which was the name he assumed while here), had lived down the mine on his first arrival, and afterwards in a room next to the office. This was an inconvenient arrangement, as it involved taking into the secret three English miners, and one day also nearly led to his being discovered; and there was a further difficulty about food. It was decided, therefore, that Mr Howard, who generally had his meals at the office, should be unwell for the next few days and feed at his own house, and that we should take up our quarters with him. To make the arrangement safe, it would be necessary to take into our confidence two English servant-girls and a Kaffir boy. We now left the room and went to Mr Howard's house, and, before going to bed, he told them who we were and swore the Kaffir boy to secrecy.

We had not reached the mine till after 2 A.M., and it was now 3 o'clock, and having slept on the hard ground for days without covering of any kind, we longed once more to go to bed like reasonable beings; but before allowing us to do so, Mr Howard insisted on our having another meal.

When morning came we heard with interest how Winston Churchill had found his way to the manager's house. He had left Pretoria, according to plan, the same evening as he had got out of the Model School, and with some difficulty had succeeded in climbing into a coal-truck on the 11.10 P.M. train. Travelling all night till he reached the vicinity of Balmoral, he had left the train, waited till dark, and, following the line, had seen before him the electric lights of the Whitbank Colliery. As this colliery is managed by Frenchmen, and there are very few Englishmen on it, discovery meant capture. Making towards the lights, he was fortunate to lose sight of them in a dip of the ground, and when he got on to the flat again he saw in front of him the glimmer of a slack-heap. He now directed his steps

towards this, and eventually arrived at Mr Howard's house. As there were at that time seven Boer farms all occupied and within a mile of the mine, he was fortunate not to chance upon one of them. The garden of this house was tidy and looked like an Englishman's, and he knocked at the door. In reply to Mr Howard, who opened it, he said that he had fallen off a train and lost his way. It soon came out who he was, and he was there and then put down the mine. The name which he used was assumed, so that all who knew the secret at the mine could talk of him more freely.

At this time Mr Burnham was sending seven trucks of wool to Lorenço Marques, and a hiding-place was made for Churchill in one of them between the bales. Accompanied by Mr Burnham, who travelled on the same train and bribed the officials to let the trucks go right through, he reached, after some delays, his destination. Suspicion, however, was roused through a member of the firm to whom the wool was consigned noticing some marks of grease on the bales, which seemed to say that some one



Mr Howard.—See p. 194.

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had occupied the truck. This person made inquiries from Burnham, who professed ignorance; but he was undoubtedly suspected, for he had been seen walking with a stranger at the time the wool arrived at Lorenço Marques, and a little time after a Dutchman asked him in Pretoria how much he had got for getting Churchill out of the country.

In spite of the risk he ran, however, he was prepared to repeat the experience for our benefit; but it was decided that as a certain amount of wool was still being sent by various persons to Lorenço Marques, and as many goods-trucks were detached for twelve hours at Middelburg, a short distance off, he and Addams should keep a look-out at Whitbank station and note the trucks that passed eastward. Hiding in one of these trucks, we could get out of the country without throwing suspicion on Burnham. If, however, none should stop at Middelburg, Burnham would buy sufficient wool for one truck-load, and send us with it, accompanying it as he had done before. Mr Howard set his face against any one con-

nected with the wool travelling by the same train as it; and in the end—for we were entirely of his opinion—Burnham, for some reason, which made me feel it was connected with the despatch of the wool, was refused a passport. After martial law had been proclaimed in the Transvaal no one could travel without a pass, and this had to be applied for in person from a field-cornet.

The day of our arrival at the coal-mine, Addams and Burnham drove to Whitbank and brought back news of Brockie, to the effect that he had arrived there that morning, and had gone to a store and asked for work. He had been passed on to another store, where he chanced upon an Englishman whom he knew. A passport, the name on which was altered after it had been obtained, had been procured for him as far as Kaapmuiden, forty-six miles from the border. Travelling there by train, he was, on arrival, to go to an Englishman, who would provide him with a Kaffir guide to take him over the border. I will leave him there for the present; but will say in passing that my fears of his getting

into Portuguese territory before us were renewed.

Addams had seen some one on the platform of the station, neatly dressed and shaved, who tallied with our description of the missing man, and soon after was informed who he was, and that he was anxious as to what had happened to us. Wisely keeping his counsel, he waited till the train passed through, and noticed one truck loaded with wool, which would do well for us if it were detached at Middelburg. Next day he drove there, but no wool-truck had been left.

During the time we were at the mine we heard of the death of Commandant-General Joubert, and that the officers who were prisoners had sent a wreath to be placed on the coffin. We were also told that Mr Cullingworth's house had after our departure been three times searched. The same had happened when Churchill left, for the Boers were determined that he had not left Pretoria, an idea which I of course encouraged.

From Mr Howard I gathered that he had

studied engineering in England—his father having been in the Royal Engineers—had lived in the Free State for many years, and had taken part in several expeditions against neighbouring tribes who had broken out; and as the Boers imagined he was a burgher, —which he was not,—he feared he might have to go to the front. He was on very good terms, however, with the field-cornet of his district, and hoped to avoid this disagreeable contingency. He had contemplated letting the officers in Pretoria know that if any escaped they must come to him, but his plan of sending a message inside a tennis-ball was too risky, with the police living in the back-yard of the school, and he had been obliged to give it up.

I have seldom experienced such care and kindness as he gave us during the few days we were under his roof. It must be remembered that he and the others who were helping us to complete our escape ran the risk of being shot if they were found out, yet they never hesitated to undertake the plan which eventually proved successful.

Both Le Mesurier and I were beginning to feel the effects of our outing, and Mr Howard did everything he could devise to make us fit and well before we left him. I had lost in weight a stone and a half, and Le Mesurier was still lame and about to have a serious illness.

Except to take a walk with me after dark towards the Whitbank lights, Mr Howard rarely left the house for long, lest the field-cornet or some other dangerous person should chance to call. As for his two guests, they passed the day indoor, blinds down, and ready to conceal themselves should any visitor arrive in the absence of their host. Dr Gillespie came over and paid us several visits, and promised to put in an appearance the night we were consigned to the truck. It was explained to us how impossible escape in a coal-truck would have been. If we had selected one in which the coal was stored in bags, we could never have made a hiding-place which would have been safe, for the shunting of the trucks would have brought down the sacks of coal on our heads. Also, it was the custom on the railway, in order

to prevent theft, to throw chalk all over the topmost layer of bags, and any shifting of them on our part would have been detected at once.

I told them that at the Douglas Colliery the plan had been to build with planks a hole sufficiently large to hold us, which would have been hidden with the sacks. They laughed at the idea, and said we should have been suffocated by the heat and coal-dust, and, worse than all, those who had helped us would have been discovered, unless the consignee at Delagoa happened to be in the secret, which in our case he would not have been.

On the return of Addams and Burnham a consultation was held, and it was decided that the latter should buy up sufficient bales of wool to make up a truck-load — sixteen would be required, — telegraph to the same firm at Lorenço Marques, offering them the wool for cash or its equivalent in kind, and say that it must be sold. The anxiety to get rid of the bales might arouse suspicion, but we could not expect to avoid every risk.

Accordingly on Monday, 26th March, a

telegram was sent to the firm at Lorenço Marques, and by evening a reply came, accepting the load of wool on satisfactory terms. Burnham knew where he could lay hands on a supply of the necessary article to complete the truck-load, and by the following Wednesday the amount required was collected. The project of our stopping at Komati Poort to see if it were possible to blow up the bridge was discussed, but finally vetoed, since most of the supplies required by the Transvaal and Free State had been already collected in the country, and the quantity now coming in by this route was insignificant.

On Wednesday the truck arrived from Whitbank drawn by one of the colliery locomotives. All day it remained on the line immediately outside the office, and from the manager's house we could see Burnham and Addams busily superintending the special manner in which it had to be loaded for our comfort and concealment.

In order that the reader may better understand the kind of place we were to occupy for sixty-three hours, I will describe it in as

few words as I can. The bales of wool, weighing each four hundred pounds, were in size about five feet long by two feet and a half broad and the same in depth. There were in all, I think, sixteen to be loaded into the truck. The truck itself was an empty coal-waggon, about eighteen feet long and seven wide, with sides of some three feet in height. Three bales of wool were laid end on at one side of the truck and three on the other. Above these were laid three parallel rows of three bales each; and as there were only two rows on the floor of the truck, occupying a total breadth of five feet, there remained a kind of tunnel down the centre of the truck. Other bales were placed above those already in position, and when all was done there remained a space for us to sit in at the end of the truck three feet by seven. This space was available because the waggon was eighteen feet long, and three bales endwise occupied only fifteen feet.

Le Mesurier and I decided that we would turn our trousers inside out, for we had been told that the floor of the truck, although it

Howard's House.



Transvaal and Delagoa Bay Colliery Company's Mine.—See p. 197.

had been swept out, would be very dirty, and we afterwards found that, in addition to this, there were numerous splinters of wood. Although it had been impressed upon us that we were almost as "safe as a house" regarding detection, I had an inward feeling that our adventures were not quite over. Once inside the truck, we knew that no line of retreat was open to us, and after the peace and quiet we had enjoyed at the mine, we did not look forward with unmixed joy to the coming journey.

Mr Howard made elaborate arrangements for victualling our novel carriage for the journey, since it was quite impossible to say how many days we might have to remain in it. I think we had with us — we had to throw away a good deal unused — a roast duck, chicken, a tin of smoked beef, butter, jam, and plenty of bread, besides some things I have forgotten. For drink we had nine bottles of cold tea, two of water, and one of whisky. With this we could hold out for a week if need be, but Burnham thought that his efforts to induce the chef (as the local station-master is called) to hook us on to the

passenger train had prevailed. Bribery, as I have said before, will do most things with a Transvaal Dutchman; but there are many others besides him who have their price.

That night the doctor came over to see us and bid us good luck on our journey. He and the others had dined at the manager's house, but we broke up early, as we were to be afoot at 4.30 A.M. The two Kaffir boys who kept guard outside the office had been got rid of on some pretext, for they would have seen us climbing into the truck. Mr Howard lent me his pocket aneroid—which he has since given to me as a memento of an eventful journey,—and as they do not call out the stations on the Delagoa Bay line, and I had no time-table, by means of this instrument, knowing the height above sea-level of each station, I always knew where we were when we stopped.

All arrangements for the morrow being ready, we bade our host good night and went to bed.

VIII.

OVER THE BORDER.

"We must be free or die."

PUNCTUALLY at 4.30 A.M., while it was still dark, we walked to the truck destined to carry us and our fortunes. The tarpaulin which covered it was thrown back, and we began storing the provisions and bottles in the numerous interstices between the woollen bales. This took a little care in arranging, and it was 5 A.M. before Le Mesurier and I climbed into the waggon which was to be our dwelling for the next two and a half days. A parting hand-shake all round being concluded, the tarpaulin was made secure by its numerous ropes to the links fixed to the lower edge of the outside of the truck. One of these ropes was tied in such a manner that

we might experience little difficulty in undoing it when the time arrived to get out. As we should find it very warm under this covering, one of the bales had been so arranged as to bulge over the edge of the truck, pushing out the tarpaulin and leaving space for the air to enter by.

We lay on the floor of the truck until ten o'clock, when Mr Howard passed by, and asking us if we were all right, said good-bye again. About this time, as I now know, the field-cornet, Theis. Pretorius, rode up. Mr Howard was standing close to the truck and thought he suspected our presence, and felt in consequence most uneasy. They walked together to the house, and Pretorius at once noticed the tablecloth in the dining-room, and inquired who had been dining there the previous night. He was informed that Dr Gillespie and some men from Brug Spruit had come over to dine and play cards. This seemed to satisfy him, but Mr Howard did not feel at ease until he left. Not long after noon we were taken by a colliery engine to the Whitbank station. One or two trains passed us, and we listened anxiously to hear



Truck outside the office.— See p. 205.

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if we were going to be picked up and taken on by them.

During the time that our truck was standing in the station, unknown to us within a somewhat exciting episode was in progress without. Addams and Burnham had gone to Whitbank station in order to see us coupled to the passing train, and what occurred is best told in the words of the former, as related to me.

"When the truck arrived at Whitbank it was halted immediately alongside of an engine which was standing in the station, the driver and stoker of which were both Dutchmen. Thinking that Le Mesurier and you might be lying in the open part of the truck, and might talk or cough, I felt not a little anxious; but to my horror, after a few minutes' suspense, both men got off their engine and talked together, one of them leaning his back against the truck. This was more than I could bear with equanimity, and I strolled over to them and invited them to come with me across the line and have a drink. They declined, stating that they could not leave the engine; and presently the driver took a

sheet of paper from his pocket, and flattening it out on the smooth side of the truck, began to write a letter. My anxiety was intense, for the slightest noise would have been heard, and I walked past on the other side and tried by some words which I muttered to give you warning to keep still. While the shunting operations prior to your departure were going on, one of the station employees undid the tarpaulin and looked into the truck."

Le Mesurier and I were in blissful ignorance of what Addams was undergoing, as fortunately we had taken the precaution of hiding ourselves between the wool bales.

At 2.30 a train, evidently from the direction of Pretoria, drew up at the station. Soon after we heard the rumbling sound and clank of an engine coming our way; this was followed by a bump and a jerk forward. We then found ourselves being moved forward, next a halt and a backward push, and we knew that we were on the passenger train. If we were not detached at Middelburg, we should be at any rate carried to Waterfall Boven, one hundred and thirty miles from the frontier and one hundred and sixty-four

from Pretoria. This would be a goodly step towards freedom.

Middelburg was passed, and we were not detached.

I was agreebly surprised that the engine had treated us so politely when it took us up, and not charged us as if to test the buffer-springs. My only previous experience of goods-train travelling had been when escorting ammunition from Dublin to Belfast in 1888. Then, though I travelled in a first-class carriage attached to the train, I was most unmercifully dealt with, more than once during the journey being shot off the seat on which I was lying. The driver of our engine on the present occasion was evidently of a more gentle nature, and treated us, who were lying on the wooden floor with nothing to deaden the shock, more kindly.

The journey was singularly uninteresting, for until I cut a hole in the tarpaulin the next day, we could see nothing of the country we were passing through. At every thirteen miles or so there was a station, and at every station we stopped. Occasionally we heard a few words of English, but far more often it

was Dutch. I made it a rule on approaching each station or halting-place to retire into the tunnel, lest any one should lift up the tarpaulin and look in. This was quite unnecessary, but it was best to be on the safe side. Now we were puffing and panting up a steep gradient, and again, shutting off steam, we glided smoothly down. During the afternoon's journey we passed the highest point on the line, called Belfast. Here the line attains to an elevation of six thousand four hundred and fifty feet above the sea-level, and in the twenty-seven miles which follow drops nearly two thousand feet to Waterfall Boven. At this station the train stops for the night, the passengers remaining in their carriages or stopping at the diminutive hotel which I believe exists here. We remained in our carriage, and were kept company by a few mosquitoes.

We passed a fairly uncomfortable night, and started again at 6.20 A.M. After leaving the station the line drops at a gradient so steep that the engine here used is provided with a cog-wheel, as on the Righi, Monte Generoso, and other European

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Truck label. "*I took the label off the truck as a memento.*"—See p. 222.

mountain railways. I believe the line passes through some very fine scenery; but if so it was lost upon us, for we could not see outside our dingy truck. At one point we passed through a tunnel —the only one, I think, on any Transvaal railway. Before reaching Komati Poort, a station on the western side of the Komati river, we thought it advisable to part with nearly all our stores. At this place, which is the last station in the Transvaal, we knew the truck would be searched, if it were to be searched at all. We therefore pitched bottles, tins, &c., out on the line, and reserved only a very small amount, in case we were unable to leave the truck as soon as we expected. We fully thought that, having got so close to the border, we should be in Portuguese territory this day; and on reaching the frontier station it was a bitter disappointment to find ourselves detached and pushed into a siding.

Before reaching the station we had retired into our tunnel, and I, being the longest and thinnest, had entered it first, feet leading. By squeezing myself a good

deal and keeping on my side, I could get nearly to the other end of the truck; and Le Mesurier, who followed me, had his head, which was to be covered by a coat in the event of a search, about five feet from the entrance to the hole. We had retired into this uncomfortable region, as I have said, about 2.20 P.M., and when we found ourselves detached we heard the chattering of several Kaffirs just outside the truck. It was very warm and exceedingly uncomfortable, and I was glad to hear our train move off about three o'clock, as our fate would be decided soon one way or the other.

The idea possessed me that the Kaffirs had been placed where they were to guard the truck until such time as it could be searched. Indeed I felt that it was known that there were stowaways within. I therefore prepared for the worst, and drew from my pocket the bag containing a hundred sovereigns which Mr Howard had kindly given me for my cheque, intending therewith to bribe whoever came. I also tore out of my diary several pages which

contained compromising matter and kept them in my hand.

A few minutes of suspense passed, and then we heard a gruff voice giving some order to the Kaffirs. The next moment a chill shot through me, and my thoughts returned to Pretoria. We heard the rattle of the links as the ropes of the tarpaulin which were tied to them at our end of the truck were unloosened. The moments that followed defy description: so many thoughts were crowded into one's mind, thoughts of recapture and ruin to all hopes of seeing more of the campaign. Soon the tarpaulin was lifted up and thrown back over the top of the truck. What happened neither of us occupants will ever know, for we dared not move to look; but the daylight from above and from the end of the tunnel flooded in upon us, and we felt that discovery was unavoidable. The search must have been most perfunctory, though in our excited imaginations it seemed to last an age. Then the tarpaulin was returned to its place, the ropes made fast, and

the Kaffirs resumed their chattering. The thought that crossed my mind was that we had been seen, but that the searcher, remarking to himself that there were two of us, had deemed it wiser to go for assistance. In this stifling hole—and there was very little air where I was—we lay till five o'clock. I could bear it no longer, and my limbs were becoming cramped; so, catching hold of my companion's foot, I intimated my desire to get into a more open space. We moved forward into the empty part of the truck, and concluded that we had had a marvellous escape from recapture. Shortly afterwards we found the cause of the Kaffir colloquy. There was a water-pipe to one side of the truck, and they were washing when we were first put into the siding. We found that we had to keep absolute silence till after dark, as the path to this stand-pipe was soft, and no footstep could be heard on it. On looking out through the hole I had cut in the tarpaulin, I saw that we were in the station, three lines distant from the platform, and with trucks on

both sides of us. About five o'clock several Boers with their women folk came on to the platform and sat there till dark, while a dog ran here and there about the lines.

The next day was Saturday, and we hoped greatly that we might not be left on the wrong side of the river, for on the Sunday following no train might be running. In our expectation of reaching the Portuguese territory on Friday, we had parted with more of our food and drink than was wise. When morning came a certain amount of shunting seemed to be going on in the station, and for a long time no engine came our way. At length at 9.30 A.M. we felt the shaking caused by an engine moving on the same line of rails as our truck. In considerable anxiety we waited. Then came a very welcome bump, and we were hauled forward and then backed into the station. At 9.40 the train steamed off, and a minute later we were thundering over the fine bridge which spans the Komati river. We grasped each other's hands, and with difficulty suppressed a shout of exultation. Five minutes later, on looking through the tarpaulin, I saw

what I had been told to look out for, a white conical pillar. This was the boundary between the Transvaal and Portuguese territory. We were free! Of three of us taken in the Chieveley armoured train, two had escaped. Now that what one had hoped and struggled to attain for so long had at length come, it was difficult to realise it,—difficult to believe that one's Anabasis was at an end.

A minute more and our goods train stopped at the back of Ressano Garcia station, the first in Portuguese territory. As we did not want to be seen getting out lest the owner of the wool might thereby become suspected, we decided to remain in the truck till dark. We had finished our water, and it was very warm, and for eight or nine hours we should get none. Many a time during that day I thought of Byron's lines—

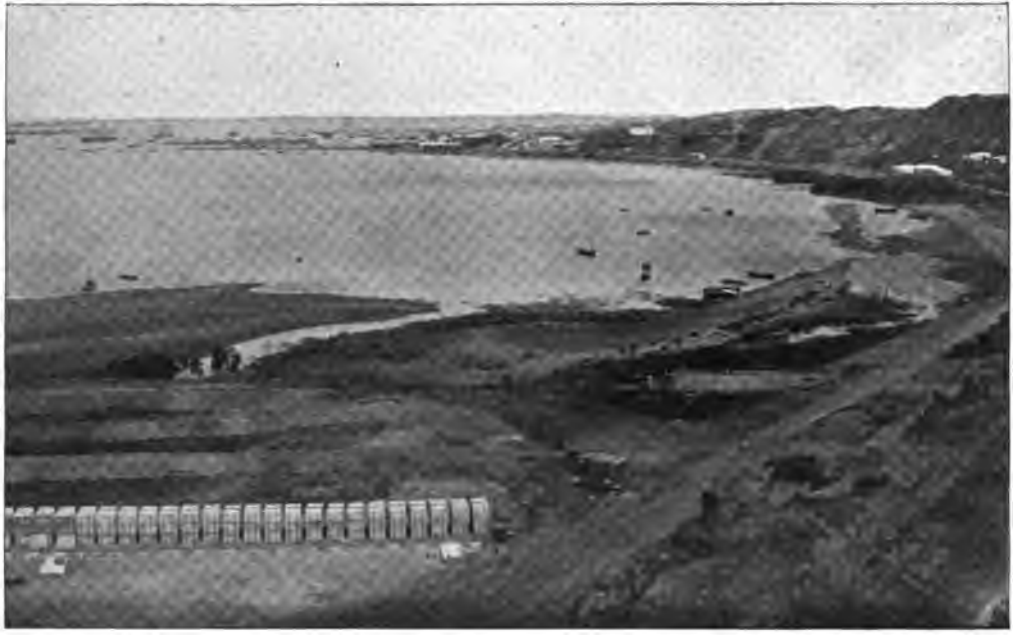
> "Ring for a valet, bid him quickly bring
> Some hock and soda-water, then you'll know
> A pleasure worthy Xerxes, the great king."

One would have given a good deal for an iced drink of that description.

It was a long weary day. At 3.15 the Transvaal train rattled into the station, evidently carrying some refugees, for the strains of the National Anthem reached our ears. At half-past six Le Mesurier leant as far out of the truck as he could and with difficulty undid one of the tarpaulin ropes. I handed out to him all that was left of our food and followed him. While we were engaged in doing this no fewer than six Kaffirs passed the truck, and he had to hide underneath it. Keeping well beyond the platform, we crossed the main line, and after throwing away the remains of our provender, went to a Kaffir kraal which was quite near. Here we found out that the hotel which is in the station was kept by two Englishmen, and we at once proceeded thither. Seeing one sitting outside on the platform, I asked him if he were an Englishman. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, I informed him who we were. Champagne was clearly indicated, and after suitably toasting the occasion, we sat down to supper, which was continued to a pretty late hour. Before going to bed we remem-

bered that we had left the tarpaulin rope untied. Returning to the truck we made all fast, and I removed as a memento one of the two tickets describing the inanimate portion of its contents.

There were no Transvaal agents here, we were told, and no one to bother us; but it would be best to hide the fact of our being escaped prisoners until we reached Delagoa Bay.



Lorenço Marques from the east.—See p. 227.

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B L

IX.

MEN MUST ENDURE.

"Their going hence even as their coming hither."

I WOULD not have exchanged my feelings on waking on Sunday, 1st of April, for a very great deal. Had we really escaped? Were we not under some deception, born of this day—All Fools'-day—the New Year of the British army? No! Here we could behave like ordinary mortals; there was no longer need to whisper, to emulate the habits of some wild animals, crouching in their dens by day and only coming forth at night. Strange, that the difference of being on one side or the other of a stone pillar should have brought this about!

But one could not lie all day indulging in this entrancing reverie—other things had to be thought of. Our landlord provided us

with a guide and some clean garments, and despatched us to the river. When lying all night in the truck at Komati Poort, I had been tempted to leave it, and, swimming the river, settle at once the question of freedom. Fortunately I had not done so, for we were told that it was infested with crocodiles, which, when they got the chance, carried off any unfortunate Kaffir who came their way. It was not a pleasant-looking river—muddy, rocky, and fast-flowing—and we did not stray far from the edge.

The village of Ressano Garcia—if it can be so called, for there are only half-a-dozen houses—is a very quiet, unhealthy spot, and, except for one or two people who boarded at the hotel, we saw no one till the up-train from Lorenço Marques arrived about noon. There were many inquiries as to who we were, and one man on his way to the Transvaal, who spoke to me, asked me if I were not an escaped prisoner?

Nearly six months later, after we had taken Lydenberg in the North-east Transvaal, I was engaged in buying stores for the officers' mess of my regiment in that town.

While crossing the market square I came across a man whose face I knew, and accosting him I asked him if he remembered to have ever seen me before. He expressed ignorance; but when I reminded him that he had spoken to me at Ressano Garcia, thinking I was an escaped prisoner, and that I had a beard then, he recollected the circumstance at once. He told me that his reason for suspecting that I was one of the escaped officers arose from his hearing people at Lorenço Marques talking about our expected arrival there from the Transvaal.

Before we left Ressano Garcia we heard that several of the men had tried to escape from Waterfall, and that one had actually reached Komati Poort and had been passed by the custom-house officer there. As he was getting into the train to continue his journey a field-cornet noticed that he was wearing "ammunition boots," called him back, and asked him how he had been employed at Johannesburg, whence he said he had come. On replying that he had worked on the Village mine, he was asked who was the manager, and his failure to give a satis-

factory reply resulted in his recapture when on the very verge of freedom.

At three o'clock our train arrived, and shortly afterwards we left, travelling at last in comfort. Our carriage, which had a corridor, was fairly crowded, and soon after the train was in motion a party of Dutchmen in another compartment burst forth into their national Volkslied. This was more than British flesh and blood could stand. We immediately rose, and speedily drowned their voices with our own. Scarcely had we got through the opening words when Uitlander after Uitlander, their faces beaming at hearing this familiar tune, crowded into our compartment and into the passage and joined us. The Dutchmen wisely ceased, and for some minutes I thought it would end in their leaving the train by an exit other than the door. After our vocal efforts had come to a close with the usual cheers, our neighbours began "La Marseillaise," and we constrained ourselves to permit them this safety-valve, although its words, if referring to the British, were far from inoffensive.

The evening was approaching as we

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Capt. Haldane and Lieut. Le Mesurier on reaching Lorenço Marques.—
See p. 231.



Capt. Haldane and Lieut. Le Mesurier the day after their arrival at Lorenço Marques.—See p. 231.

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B L

neared the end of our journey, and from the windows we could see the calm blue sea which runs far inland. Like Xenophon and his Greeks of old, we gazed upon it with delight, and realised with what heartfelt thanks they had broken into their cry, "Thalassa! Thalassa!"

Soon the station was reached, crowded with those who had come to see more refugees arrive. Passing quickly through them, for we were troubled with no baggage, we drove to the Cardoza Hotel, picturesquely situated on the high ground overlooking the bay. We had intended to keep our secret; but (how I did not know) every one seemed to be already in possession of it, and one of the British consul's assistants had met us at the station. That evening I gave Mr Douglas, the courteous correspondent of the 'Times,' a brief account of our adventures, omitting everything about our having hidden under the floor of the Model School. My reason for doing so was that Le Mesurier, Brockie, and I had, in the interests of those who had helped us and fed us and remained behind, bound ourselves to say nothing about

that part of our story until the end of the war.

Later in the evening I received a request from Mr Fritz Pincus, Reuter's correspondent (who with his colleague, Mr Minzesheimer, an American gentleman, treated us most hospitably), that I would kindly call on him. I did so, and gave him a brief account similar to that I had given to the other correspondent. After I had finished he remarked to me, "How long did you remain hidden under the floor? for you have told me nothing about that."

I was dumfoundered. Here was a man in Lorenço Marques in possession of what we were sworn to keep secret. Questioning him, I found out how it had reached his ears, and indeed those of most of the inhabitants of Lorenço Marques, including Mr Carnegie Ross, the British consul. He did not then tell me who was his informant, but only that it was some one who had left Pretoria after we had hidden. I felt sure that no one had left who knew me except three British officers released on parole, and they had been ignorant that we were hidden, and even had

they not been, they were to be trusted. Here was a puzzle that I could not solve.

Next morning I gave the 'Times' correspondent that portion of my tale which I had omitted the previous evening. Concealment was no longer of any use, as Lorenço Marques swarms with Transvaal agents, who doubtless long ago had reported to their Government.

One thing Le Mesurier and I felt thankful for, which was, that considering it must have been known in the Transvaal that we had not escaped on the 26th of February, but only after the prisoners were removed, on the 16th of March, we were remarkably fortunate to have escaped at all. After making some inquiries, I succeeded in tracing the matter to its source.

It seemed that Sergeant-Major Brockie, on reaching Kaapmuiden, had found that the person to whom he was consigned had just died. He got employment at the station-bar at that place, and, strangely enough, his and our descriptions were posted up there in the view of all. A few days after, a clergyman, whom I met, saw him and got

part of his story from him; but, unknown to us, a certain person, not an officer, had been released on parole from Pretoria. Here was the offender, though not primarily responsible. This person had seen Brockie at the Kaapmuiden bar, who told him our adventures from beginning to end. On reaching Lorenço Marques he had indiscreetly parted with what he had been told, and so the facts of our escape got abroad. We felt greatly annoyed on account of the officers who had helped us at the Model School, and I have no doubt that until they read this they will naturally think we betrayed them.

One day while we were walking through the streets of the town, an English-speaking man came up to me and almost without preliminaries said, "That was a 'cute dodge of Patterson's, sending you news across the street at Pretoria." I looked blankly at him, and he appeared a good deal taken aback; and on my pointing out to him that I was not in the habit of talking to utter strangers in the public street, he replied that he had something of an im-

portant nature to communicate to me. I gave him my address and told him an hour at which he could call, but, as I expected, he did not appear, and I have since thought that he was a Boer spy, and was merely trying to "pump" me.

We had just missed a steamer to Durban, so we had to wait for the König on Friday, April 6. During the days we remained in Portuguese territory we spent a great deal of time on board the British cruisers, five of which were in harbour, and from their officers we received a very warm welcome. On board the Forte Le Mesurier found an old schoolfellow, and I discovered that her commander, Captain C. H. Dundas, and I were Scotch cousins. I omitted to say that the day after reaching Lorenço Marques we were photographed, and again on the following day. On Friday night we left for Durban, there being on board Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, full of his Swaziland trip, and Sergeant-Major Brockie, who had arrived the previous evening.

The last I had heard of him was that he was employed at Kaapmuiden. There

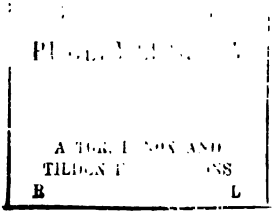
he had heard that a general exodus of British subjects was about to take place from the Transvaal, and his friends at Whitbank had procured for him a passport as far as Komati Poort. Travelling there with a crowd of refugees, he had bribed one of the guard at the frontier bridge to let him cross over to get a drink at Ressano Garcia, as no liquor, under martial law, was permitted to be sold in the Transvaal. As soon as he was beyond the river he made for the Portuguese frontier station, and, rejoining the train there, arrived in safety at Lorenço Marques.

Le Mesurier and I parted at Pietermaritzburg—he to go round to the Free State with General Hunter's Division, I to rejoin my regiment at Ladysmith. The trying experience we had gone through gave him enteric fever, and after being invalided to England and remaining there for some time, he returned to South Africa only to be sent home again shortly afterwards with malarial fever. Brockie fared better, but he too was obliged to go to hospital. I hear that he has recently been given a



Photo by Stereoscopic Co.

Durban from the Bluff.—See p. 231.


A TOR
TILDEN

commission, and is now recruiting-officer in Johannesburg. As regards myself, during our tramp to the coal-mines I must have imbibed some fever-germs, for I have had two attacks of malarial fever. We have both obtained our desire—to get back to the front to duty; and as I write these words, and the end of the campaign seems near, I cannot help regretting deeply the wasted months of captivity, and try to console myself with the well-known couplet—

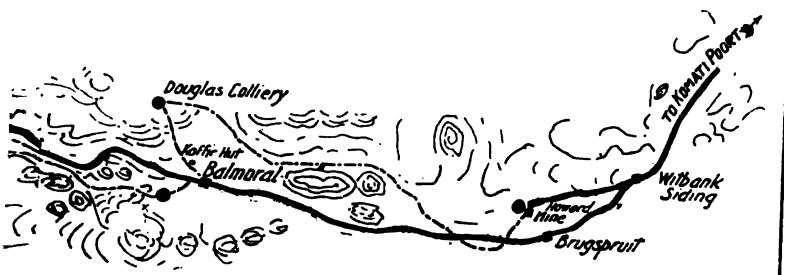
"Be cheerful; wipe thine eyes;
Some falls are means the happier to arise."

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Dorstspruit
Ressano
Garcia
KOMATI
POORT


Douglas Colliery
Kaffir Hut
Balmoral
Howard
Mine
Brugspruit
Witbank
Siding
TO KOMATI POORT


Ressano
Garcia
KOMATI
POORT


Douglas Colliery
Kaffir Hut
Balmoral
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